

# I Believe

THE PERSONAL PHILOSOPHIES  
OF TWENTY-THREE  
EMINENT MEN AND WOMEN  
OF OUR TIME





# I Believe

W. H. Auden. Pearl Buck. Stuart Chase  
Albert Einstein. Havelock Ellis  
E. M. Forster. J. B. S. Haldane  
Lancelot Hogben. Julian Huxley  
Sir Arthur Keith. Harold J. Laski  
Lin Yutang. Emil Ludwig  
Thomas Mann. Jacques Maritain  
Jules Romains. Bertrand Russell  
John Strachey. James Thurber  
Hendrik Willem van Loon  
Beatrice Webb. H. G. Wells  
Rebecca West

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W. H. Auden

Since the death of William Butler Yeats, W. H. Auden, despite his youth, is by many good judges accounted the greatest living figure in English poetry. His verse combines a fruitful reverence for the great tradition of English verse with a remarkable power of utilizing that tradition to express in a mingled tone of beauty, indignation, and irony the tragic world of to-day. Auden's regenerative influence on his contemporaries, both poets and prose writers, has been profound. Without desiring to do so, he has become the leader of a school and bids fair to occupy a position in his generation similar to that T. S. Eliot occupied in his.

Wystan Hugh Auden was born in England in 1907. He was educated at Gresham's School, Holt, and at Christ Church, Oxford. He lists himself as a schoolmaster but has engaged in other occupations, including journalism. In 1928 and 1929 he lived in Berlin, in 1937 visited war-torn Spain, and in 1938 travelled in China. Since 1935 he has been married to Erika, daughter of Thomas Mann.

He has written "Poems" (1930); "The Orators" (1932); "The Dance of Death" (1933); "The Dog Beneath the Skin," with Christopher Isherwood (1935); "The Ascent of F 6" (1936); "Letters from Iceland," with Louis MacNeice (1937); "On the Frontier," a play (1939); "Journey to a War," with Christopher Isherwood (1939). He has edited "The Poet's Tongue," with John Garrett (1934); and "The Oxford Book of Light Verse" (1938).



# W. H. Auden

*Everything that lives is Holy.*—BLAKE

## I

GOODNESS IS EASIER to recognize than to define; only the greatest novelists can portray good people. For me, the least unsatisfactory description is to say that any thing or creature is good which is discharging its proper function, using its powers to the fullest extent permitted by its environment and its own nature—though we must remember that “nature” and “environment” are intellectual abstractions from a single, constantly changing reality. Thus, people are happy and good who have found their vocation: what vocations there are will depend upon the society within which they are practised.

There are two kinds of goodness, “natural” and “moral.” An organism is naturally good when it has reached a state of equilibrium with its environment. All healthy animals and plants are naturally good in this sense. But any change toward a greater freedom of action is a morally good change. I think it permissible, for example, to speak of a favourable mutation as a morally good act. But moral good passes into natural good. A change is made and a new equilibrium stabilized. Below man, this happens at once; for each species the change toward freedom is not repeated. In man, the evolution can be continued, each stage of moral freedom being superseded by a new one. For example, we frequently

admire the "goodness" of illiterate peasants as compared with the "badness" of many townees. But this is a romantic confusion. The goodness we admire in the former is a natural, not a moral, goodness. Once, the life of the peasant represented the highest use of the powers of man, the farthest limit of his freedom of action. This is no longer true. The townee has a wider range of choice and fuller opportunities of using his power. He frequently chooses wrongly, and so becomes morally bad. We are right to condemn him for this, but to suggest that we should all return to the life of the peasant is to deny the possibility of moral progress. Worship of youth is another romantic pessimism of this kind.

(2) Similarly, there is natural and moral evil. Determined and unavoidable limits to freedom of choice and action, such as the necessity for destroying life in order to eat and live, climate, accidents, are natural evils. If, on the other hand, I, say, as the keeper of a boarding-house, knowing that vitamins are necessary to health, continue, for reasons of gain or laziness, to feed my guests on an insufficient diet, I commit moral evil. Just as moral good tends to pass into natural good, so, conversely, what was natural evil tends, with every advance in knowledge, to become moral evil.

(3) The history of life on this planet is the history of the ways in which life has gained control over and freedom within its environment. Organisms may either adapt themselves to a particular environment—e.g. the fleshy leaves of the cactus permit it to live in a desert—or develop the means to change their environment—e.g. organs of locomotion.

Below the human level, this progress has taken place through structural biological changes, depending on the lack of mutations or the chances of natural selection. Only man, with his conscious intelligence, has been able to continue

W. H. AUDEN

his evolution after his biological development has finished. By studying the laws of physical nature, he has gained a large measure of control over them and in so far as he is able to understand the laws of his own nature and of the societies in which he lives, he approaches that state where what he wills may be done. "Freedom," as a famous definition has it, "is consciousness of necessity."

(4) The distinguishing mark of man as an animal is his plastic, unspecialized "foetalized" nature. All other animals develop more quickly and petrify sooner. In other words, the dictatorship of heredity is weakest in man. He has the widest choice of environment, and, in return, changes in environment, either changes in nature or his social life, have the greatest effect on him.

(5) In contrast to his greatest rivals for biological supremacy, the insects, man has a specialized and concentrated central nervous system, and unspecialized peripheral organs, i.e. the stimuli he receives are collected and pooled in one organ. Intelligence and choice can only arise when more than one stimulus is presented at the same time in the same place.

(6) Man has always been a social animal living in communities. This falsifies any theories of Social Contract. The individual *in vacuo* is an intellectual abstraction. The individual is the product of social life; without it, he could be no more than a bundle of unconditioned reflexes. Men are born neither free nor good.

(7) Societies and cultures vary enormously. On the whole, Marx seems to me correct in his view that physical conditions and the forms of economic production have dictated the forms of communities: e.g. the geographical peculiarities of the Aegean peninsula produced small democratic city-

states, while the civilizations based on river irrigation like Egypt and Mesopotamia were centralized autocratic empires.

(8) *But* we are each conscious of ourselves as a thinking, feeling, and willing whole, and this is the only whole of which we have direct knowledge. This experience conditions our thinking. I cannot see how other wholes, family, class, nation, etc., can be wholes to us except in a purely descriptive sense. We do not see a state, we see a number of individuals. Anthropological studies of different communities, such as Dr. Benedict's work on primitive American cultures, or that of the Lynds on contemporary Middletown, have shown the enormous power of a given cultural form to determine the nature of the individuals who live under it. A given cultural pattern develops those traits of character and modes of behaviour which it values, and suppresses those which it does not. But this does not warrant ascribing to a culture a super-personality, conscious of its parts as I can be conscious of my hand or liver. A society consists of a certain number of individuals living in a particular way, in a particular place, at a particular time; nothing else.

(9) The distinction drawn by Locke between society and government is very important. Again, Marx seems to me correct in saying that sovereignty or government is not the result of a contract made by society as a whole, but has always been assumed by those people in society who owned the instruments of production.

Theories of Rights arise as a means to attack or justify a given social form, and are a sign of social strain. Burke, and later thinkers, who developed the idealist theory of the state, were correct in criticizing the *a priori* assumptions of Social Contract and in pointing out that society is a growing organism. But, by identifying society and government, they

ignored the power of the latter to interfere with the natural growth of the former, and so were led to denying the right of societies to revolt against their governments, and to the hypostatization of the *status quo*.

(10) A favourite analogy for the state among idealist political thinkers is with the human body. This analogy is false. The constitution of the cells in the body is determined and fixed; nerve cells can only give rise to more nerve cells, muscle cells to muscle cells, etc. But, in the transition from parent to child, the whole pack of inherited genetic characters is shuffled. The king's son may be a moron, the coal heaver's a mathematical genius. The entire pattern of talents and abilities is altered at every generation.

(11) Another false analogy is with the animal kingdom. Observed from the outside (how it appears to them no one knows), the individual animal seems to be sacrificed to the continuance of the species. This observation is used to deny the individual any rights against the state. But there is a fundamental difference between man and all other animals in that an animal which has reached maturity does not continue to evolve, but a man does. As far as we can judge, the only standard in the animal world is physical fitness, but in man a great many other factors are involved. What has survival value can never be determined; man has survived as a species through the efforts of individuals who at the time must often have seemed to possess very little biological survival value.

(12) Man's advance in control over his environment is making it more and more difficult for him, at least in the industrialized countries with a high standard of living, like America or England, to lead a naturally good life, and easier and easier to lead a morally bad one.

## I BELIEVE

Let us suppose, for example, that it is sometimes good for mind and body to take a walk. Before there were means of mechanical transport, men walked because they could not do anything else; i.e. they committed naturally good acts. To-day, a man has to choose whether to use his car or walk. It is possible for him, by using the car on an occasion when he ought to walk, to commit a morally wrong act, and it is quite probable that he will. It is despair at finding a solution to this problem which is responsible for much of the success of Fascist blood-and-soil ideology.

## II

(1) A society, then, is good in so far as

(a) it allows the widest possible range of choices to its members to follow those vocations to which they are suited;

(b) it is constantly developing, and providing new vocations which make a fuller demand upon their increasing powers.

The Greeks assumed that the life of intellectual contemplation was the only really "good" vocation. It has become very much clearer now that this is only true for certain people, and that there are a great many other vocations of equal value: human nature is richer and more varied than the Greeks thought.

(2) No society can be absolutely good. Utopias, whether like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or Dante's *Paradiso*, because they are static, only portray states of natural evil or good. (Someone, I think it was Landor, said of the characters in the *Inferno*: "But they don't want to get out.") People committing acts in obedience to law or habit are not being moral. As voluntary action always turns, with repetition,

into habit, morality is only possible in a world which is constantly changing and presenting a fresh series of choices. No society is absolutely good; but some are better than others.

(3) If we look at a community at any given moment, we see that it consists of good men and bad men, clever men and stupid men, sensitive and insensitive, law-abiding and lawless, rich and poor. Our politics, our view of what form our society and our government should take here and now, will depend on

(a) how far we think the bad is due to preventable causes;

(b) what, if we think the causes preventable, we find them to be. If we take the extremely pessimistic view that evil is in no way preventable, our only course is the hermit's, to retire altogether from this wicked world. If we take a fairly pessimistic view, that badness is inherited (i.e. that goodness and badness are not determined by social relations), we shall try to establish an authoritarian regime of the good. If, on the other hand, we are fairly optimistic, believing that bad environment is the chief cause of badness in individuals, and that the environment can be changed, we shall tend toward a belief in some sort of democracy. Personally I am fairly optimistic, partly for reasons which I have tried to outline above, and partly because the practical results of those who have taken the more pessimistic view do not encourage me to believe that they are right.

(4) *Fairly optimistic.* In the history of man, there have been a few civilized individuals but no civilized community, not one, ever. Those who talk glibly of Our Great Civilization, whether European, American, Chinese, or Russian, are doing their countries the greatest disservice. We are still barbarians. All advances in knowledge, from Galileo

down to Freud or Marx, are, in the first impact, humiliating; they begin by showing us that we are not as free or as grand or as good as we thought; and it is only when we realize this that we can begin to study how to overcome our own weakness.

(5) What then are the factors which limit and hinder men from developing their powers and pursuing suitable vocations?

(a) Lack of material goods. Man is an animal and until his immediate material and economic needs are satisfied, he cannot develop further. In the past this has been a natural evil: methods of production and distribution were too primitive to guarantee a proper standard of life for everybody. It is doubtful whether this is any longer true; in which case, it is a moral and remediable evil. Under this head I include all questions of wages, food, housing, health, insurance, etc.

(b) Lack of education. Unless an individual is free to obtain the fullest education with which his society can provide him, he is being injured by society. This does not mean that everybody should have the *same* kind of education, though it does mean, I think, education of some kind or other, up to university age. Education in a democracy must have two aims. It must give vocational guidance and training; assist each individual to find out where his talents lie, and then help him to develop these to the full—this for some people might be completed by sixteen—and it must also provide a general education; develop the reason and the consciousness of every individual, whatever his job, to a point where he can for himself distinguish good from bad, and truth from falsehood—this requires a much longer educational period.

At present education is in a very primitive stage; we probably teach the wrong things to the wrong people at the



wrong time. It is dominated, at least in England, by an academic tradition which, except for the specially gifted, only fits its pupils to be schoolteachers. It is possible that the time for specialization (i.e. vocational training) should be in early adolescence, the twelve-to-sixteen group, and again in the latter half of the university period; but that the sixteen-to-twenty age group should have a general education.

(c) Lack of occupations which really demand the full exercise of the individual's powers. This seems to me a very difficult problem indeed. The vast majority of jobs in a modern community do people harm. Children admire gangsters more than they admire factory operatives because they sense that being a gangster makes more demands on the personality than being a factory operative and is therefore, for the individual, morally better. It isn't that the morally better jobs are necessarily better rewarded economically: for instance, my acquaintance with carpenters leads me to think carpentry a very good profession, and my acquaintance with stockbrokers to think stockbroking a very bad one. The only jobs known to me which seem worthy of respect, both from the point of view of the individual and society, are being a creative artist, some kind of highly skilled craftsman, a research scientist, a doctor, a teacher, or a farmer. This difficulty runs far deeper than our present knowledge or any immediate political change we can imagine, and is therefore still, to a certain extent, a natural rather than a moral evil, though it is obviously much aggravated by gross inequalities in economic reward, which could be remedied. I don't myself much like priggish phrases such as "the right use of leisure." I agree with Eric Gill that work is what one does to please oneself, leisure the time one has to serve the community. The most one can say is that we must never forget that most people are being

degraded by the work they do, and that the possibilities of sharing the duller jobs through the whole community will have to be explored much more fully. Incidentally, there is reason for thinking that the routine manual and machine-minding jobs are better tolerated by those whose talents are for book learning than by those whose talents run in the direction of manual skill.

(d) Lack of suitable psychological conditions. People cannot grow unless they are happy and, even when their material needs have been satisfied, they still need many other things. They want to be liked and to like other people; to feel valuable, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others; to feel free and to feel responsible; above all, not to feel lonely and isolated. The first great obstacle is the size of modern communities. By nature, man seems adapted to live in communities of a very moderate size; his economic life has compelled him to live in ever-enlarging ones. Many of the damaging effects of family life described by modern psychologists may be the result of our attempt to make the family group satisfy psychological needs which can only be satisfied by the community group. The family is based on inequality, the parent-child relationship; the community is, or should be, based on equality, the relationship of free citizens. We need both. Fortunately, recent technical advances, such as cheap electrical power, are making smaller social units more of a practical possibility than they seemed fifty years ago, and people with as divergent political views as the anarchists and Mr. Ford are now agreed about the benefits of industrial decentralization.

The second obstacle is social injustice and inequality. A man cannot be a happy member of a community if he feels that the community is treating him unjustly; the more

complicated and impersonal economic life becomes, the truer this is. In a small factory where employer and employees know each other personally, i.e. where the conditions approximate to those of family life, the employees will accept without resentment a great deal more inequality than their fellows in a modern large-scale production plant.

### III

(1) Society consists of a number of individual wills living in association. There is no such thing as a general will of society, except in so far as all these individual wills agree in desiring certain material things, e.g. food and clothes. It is also true, perhaps, that all desire happiness and goodness, but their conceptions of these may and do conflict with each other. Ideally, government is the means by which all the individual wills are assured complete freedom of moral choice and at the same time prevented from ever clashing. Such an ideal government, of course, does not and could not ever exist. It presupposes that every individual in society possesses equal power, and also that every individual takes part in the government.

(2) In practice, the majority is always ruled by a minority, a certain number of individuals who decide what a law shall be, and who command enough force to see that the majority obeys them. To do this, they must also command a varying degree of consent by the majority, though this consent need not be and never is complete. They must, for example, have the consent of the armed forces and the police, and they must either control the financial resources of society, or have the support of those who do.

(3) Democracy assumes, I think correctly, the right of every individual to revolt against his government by voting against it. It has not been as successful as its advocates hoped, firstly, because it failed to realize the pressure that the more powerful and better educated classes could bring to bear upon the less powerful and less educated in their decisions—it ignored the fact that in an economically unequal society votes may be equal but voters are not—and secondly, because it assumed, I think quite wrongly, that voters living in the same geographical area would have the same interests, again ignoring economic differences and the change from an agricultural to an industrial economy. I believe that representation should be by trade or profession. No one person has exactly the same interests as another; but I, say, as a writer in Birmingham, have more interests in common with other writers in Leeds or London than I have with my next-door neighbour who manufactures cheap jewellery. This failure of the geographical unit to correspond to a genuine political unit is one of the factors responsible for the rise of the party machine. We rarely elect a local man whom we know personally; we have to choose one out of two or three persons offered from above. This seems to me thoroughly unsatisfactory. I think one of our mistakes is that we do not have enough stages in election; a hundred thousand voters are reduced by a single act to one man who goes to Parliament. This must inevitably mean a large degree of dictatorship from above. A sane democracy would, I feel, choose its representatives by a series of electoral stages, each lower stage electing the one above it.

(4) Legislation is a form of coercion, of limiting freedom. Coercion is necessary because societies are not free communities; we do not choose the society into which we are born; we can attempt to change it, but we cannot leave it.

Ideally, people should be free to know evil and to choose the good, but the consequences of choosing evil are often to compel others to do evil. The guiding principle of legislation in a democracy should be, not to make people good, but to prevent them making each other bad against their will. Thus we all agree that there should be laws against theft or murder, because no one chooses to be stolen from or murdered. But it is not always so simple. It is argued by *laissez-faire* economists that legislation concerning hours of work, wages, etc., violates the right of individual wills to bargain freely. But this presupposes that the bargaining powers of different wills are equal, and that each bargain is an individual act. Neither of these assumptions is true, and economic legislation is justified because they are not.

But there are other forms of legislation which are less justified. It is true that the individual will operating in a series of isolated acts is an abstraction—our present acts are the product of past acts and in their turn determine future ones—but I think the law has to behave as if this abstraction were a fact, otherwise there is no end to legislative interference. Take the case, for instance, of drink. If I become a drunkard, I may not only impair my own health, but also that of my children; and it can be argued, and often is, that the law should see that I do not become one by preventing me from purchasing alcohol. I think, however, that this is an unjustifiable extension of the law's function. Everything I do, the hour I go to bed, the literature I read, the temperature at which I take my bath, affects my character for good or bad, and so, ultimately, the characters of those with whom I come in contact. If the legislator is once allowed to consider the distant effects of my acts, there is no reason why he should not decide everything for me. The law has to limit

self to considering the act in isolation: if the act directly violates the will of another, the law is justified in interfering; only indirectly, it is not. Nearly all legislation on "moral" matters, such as drink, gambling, sexual behaviour between adults, etc., seems to me bad.

(5) In theory, every individual has a right to his own conception of what form society ought to take and what form of government there should be and to exercise his will to realize it; on the other hand, everyone else has a right to reject his conception. In practice, this boils down to the right of different political parties to exist, parties representing the main divisions of interest in society. As the different sectional interests cannot form societies on their own—e.g. the employees cannot set up one state by themselves and the employers another—there is always coercion of the weaker by the stronger by propaganda, legislation, and sometimes physical violence; and the more evenly balanced the opposing forces are, the more violent that coercion is likely to become.

I do not see how in politics one can decide *a priori* what conduct is moral, or what degree of tolerance there should be. One can only decide which party in one's private judgment has the best view of what society ought to be, and to support it; and remember that, since all coercion is a moral evil, we should view with extreme suspicion those who welcome it. Thus I cannot see how a Socialist country could tolerate the existence of a Fascist party any more than a Fascist country could tolerate the existence of a Socialist party. I judge them differently because I think that the Socialists are right and the Fascists are wrong in their view of society. (It is always wrong in an absolute sense to kill, but all killing is not equally bad; it does matter who is killed.)

Intolerance is an evil and has evil consequences we can

never accurately foresee and for which we shall always have to suffer; but there are occasions on which we must be prepared to accept the responsibility of our convictions. We must be as tolerant as we dare—only the future can judge whether we were tyrants or foolishly weak—and if we cannot dare very far, it is a serious criticism of ourselves and our age.

(6) But we do have to choose, every one of us. We have the misfortune or the good luck to be living in one of the great critical historical periods, when the whole structure of our society and its cultural and metaphysical values are undergoing a radical change. It has happened before, when the Roman Empire collapsed, and at the Reformation, and it may happen again in the future.

In periods of steady evolution, it is possible for the common man to pursue his private life without bothering his head very much over the principles and assumptions by which he lives, and to leave politics in the hands of professionals. But ours is not such an age. It is idle to lament that the world is becoming divided into hostile ideological camps; the division is a fact. No policy of isolation is possible. Democracy, liberty, justice, and reason are being seriously threatened and, in many parts of the world, destroyed. It is the duty of every one of us, not only to ourselves but to future generations of men, to have a clear understanding of what we mean when we use these words, to remember that while an idea can be absolutely bad, a person can never be, and to defend what we believe to be right, perhaps even at the cost of our lives and those of others.



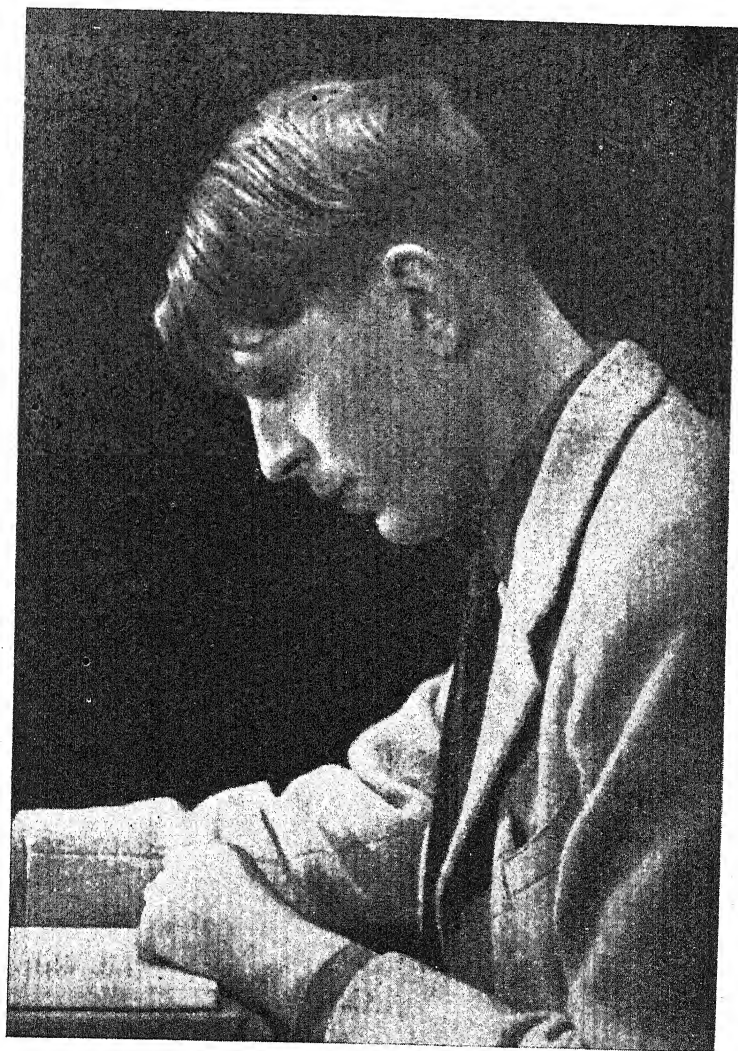


Pearl Buck

*Pearl Buck is the third American and the first American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. Famous the world over for her magnificent novels of Chinese life, she interprets the Oriental mind to Westerners in such a manner as to bring home to us the truth expressed in the title of her great translation of a Chinese classic—"All Men Are Brothers."*

*Pearl Buck was born in Hillsboro, West Virginia, in 1892. She attended Randolph-Macon Woman's College and, at a somewhat later date, Cornell University. Her middle years have been largely devoted to China. From 1921 to 1931 she taught at the University of Nanking, and at the Government University of Nanking also. The first fruit of her profound and sympathetic knowledge of her adopted second country was the fine novel "East Wind—West Wind" (1929), but "The Good Earth" (1931) was the book that won her a wide international public. "The Good Earth" was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and has been successfully filmed. Pearl Buck's publications since 1931 include "Sons" (1932); "The First Wife and Other Stories" (1933); "All Men Are Brothers," a superb translation of the Chinese picaresque classic "Shui Hu Chuan" (1933); "The Mother" (1934); "A House Divided" (1935); "House of Earth" (1935); the two biographical portraits of her parents, "The Exile" (1936) and "Fighting Angel" (1936), "This Proud Heart" (1938); and "The Patriot" (1939). Pearl Buck now makes her home permanently in the United States.*





W. H. AUDEN



PEARL BUCK

[*Courtesy Methuen & Co. Ltd.*]

# Pearl Buck

IT IS NO simple matter to pause in the midst of one's maturity, when life is in full function, to examine what are the principles which control that functioning. That there are principles one knows, of course. No ordered existence is possible without them, and only an ordered existence is productive—of happiness if of nothing else. But the mind is like the body—the less its possessor is aware of it the more easy is its working. To stop the mind, therefore, to examine why it chooses to do what it does, may be the more difficult when long ago that mind deliberately gave up asking why it exists and chose as deliberately to consider for the rest of its conscious time how it would exist.

For a philosophy of living is to the mind what the habit of health is to the body. Both should be taken for granted so long as life goes on happily and fully. Only when malady and unhappiness appear is there reason to examine the philosophy of body or mind. I doubt therefore that any healthy soul can put down the fundamentals of his health. He may make desultory remarks about it, such as giving the fragments of it which he calls his beliefs. But to say I believe in tolerance, or I believe in truth, beauty, goodness, or any other thing, is superficial statement after all, and such stated beliefs may have nothing to do with the actual philosophy of living. The philosophy of any one person is comprehended and expressed in the habit of his being, not in regard to any one thing but toward the whole of life.

This habit has its deepest shape in the primary attitude of

the person toward life. We in the West with our traditions of rebellion tend to think that rebellion shows independence, aggressiveness, boldness. But we are wrong, or so I think. The weakest people are often the most rebellious, finding in universal discontent their excuse for no positive and resolute agreement with anything. There are specific times, to be sure, when rebellion is right and necessary. But I am not speaking of specific times, each of which must be judged when it comes. I am speaking of the primary attitude toward life. It is, it must be, acceptance, and this acceptance of life is the most aggressive act of the conscious human mind.

This mind, having made its acceptance, partakes then like everything else in the universe, in its microcosm, of the universe. The universe is in a perpetual motion, and so is the mind. And this motion is constantly between two poles, and the two poles are the two eternal forces of the universe, the positive force of life and the negative force of death. When I say this it may seem that I am arbitrarily assigning these qualities to life and death—life may be negative and death may be positive, for all I know. I do not understand either one enough to ascribe qualities to them. All that I know is that in every thinking individual there are these two forces, life and death, and that they are opposing forces.

When I say life and death in this sense I realize I am putting into these two words more than they ordinarily carry, so that I risk misunderstanding. But there are no other two words to be used. So let me freight them, even if too heavily. By life I mean here that which moves onward, that which is active and vigorous within itself, that which exists and grows by itself and by everything which it touches, which responds positively to any stimulus. By death I mean that which is quiescent and recessive, that which subsides in itself, that which

PEARL BUCK

shrinks away from effort, by itself or by anything it touches, which responds negatively to any stimulus.

I do not mean in any sense that life is merely activity. Purposeless activity may be a phase of death. What I mean is more nearly expressed when I say life is active being and death is static being. Each has an energy, life the energy of action and death the energy of inertia. I realize again that these two words, energy and inertia, may seem contradictory. But they are not. Inertia is full of recessive energy. Anyone who has lived in the home with a person who chooses death rather than life as a philosophy, will know what I mean. Such a person merely by being inert, by never responding to any stimulus, exercises an energy sufficient to neutralize at least his equal weight of life. There is a tremendous energy in being simply static.

Human beings may then, among all their other classifications, be divided into these two fundamental types, those who choose life and those who choose death. And when an individual chooses between these two he chooses between two parts of himself.

For as soon as a human being is born, perhaps as soon as he is conceived, life and death begin their opposing work in him, and at the same moment he begins the long struggle of his existence, yielding now to one and then to the other. For he is not compounded wholly of the two. He is an entity and he has a will separate from either, or at least a wish separate from either which may develop into a will. But it wavers like a magnetic needle between the two opposing forces.

This dualism in the universe is everywhere recognized, not only in nature but in the minds and spirits of men. Every religion has recognized it in one form or another. But I am

not interested in its religious or even in its philosophical expression. I am interested only in how the individual copes with it as he finds it in himself, whether he recognizes it or not, and whether he considers life worth having or not. That, it seems to me, is the primary question which assails each of us—is life worth having? If we decide it is, then the energy of action prevails in us and we fight death, and if it is not worth having, then the energy of inertia prevails and we never really become aware of life, because all of our being is pervaded with death's inertia.

I realize a point to be considered in answering this question of the worth of life. That is, one's answer to it may vary according to mood and circumstance. There are moods which fall upon us all which we cannot explain, or think we cannot explain, a vague illness of the spirit, an unreasoning sadness which has no seeming explanation in any circumstance. We are as rich to-day in all benefits as we were yesterday; neither accident nor poverty has befallen us. But yesterday we were happy with life and to-day we are sad with death. Yesterday we knew life was worth having and to-day we are not sure. We shrink away from it. And yet the external world is the same. It is our mood which has changed.

Of course the external world may or may not be the same. If it is, if the weather is as fine and all as good as it was yesterday, then the cause of inertia is within us. It is obvious to say that it may be caused by some such chemical contention as indigestion, and yet chemistry too is pervaded by this opposition of life and death. And when we have within us the inertia of obstinate chemical properties which refuse to co-operate, that also is the inertia of death and we are pervaded by it and all our being cries out that life is not good, and when we cry that we choose death.



If mood does not confuse us, then circumstance may. There are many people who say, "Certainly the life I now live is not worth having. I am too poor, too unhappy at home, too unsuccessful in achieving the success I crave, and therefore life is not worth having." That is, practically, they choose death since circumstances are unchangeable, or unless they can be changed.

Let me say quickly that of course this choice of death which I have put down so badly does not mean an actual choice of physical death—that is, suicide. No, in spite of all that one hears said to the contrary, the act of suicide requires a certain courage of conviction or despair of which few persons are capable. When I say death, I return to my own definition. I mean that state in which a person lives when he has ceased to develop any of his abilities or interests, when his existence has become a mere routine of minimum activity, physical or mental, and when so far as the world or himself is concerned, he might as well be dead. That he still continues to eat and sleep and do a little round has no importance. Actually he has already been absorbed into the inertia of death.

The variance of mood is valid, if transient. The person who chooses life will come to recognize mood more and more clearly after he has passed childhood and youth and will take pains to prevent moods by attention to chemistry, or at least he will learn to ascribe mood to its proper causes and not mistake atoms of obdurate matter within him for an obdurate universe without. He will learn to reject the inertia of death in this guise as clearly as he does in any other, though it is true that an individual of less intelligence may never recognize mood for what it is, and, failing in this recognition, will go on repeating the folly of its causes, and

so give himself more and more, unwittingly, to the inertia of death.

But the variance of circumstance is much more serious than that of mood because by saying, "The life I now have is not worth living," and by receding from it in spirit while physically it goes on, many persons deprive themselves of any life at all, since their circumstances may not change. The truth is, one who chooses life rather than death will live in any circumstance, pouring life into every cranny, however cramped the space, shaping what is there rather than being shaped by it. I think of gardens I have seen in the Orient where in a few square yards between city walls there was created the illusion of a wide landscape. One could go there and forget the pressing walls and be surrounded with the large atmosphere of trees and mountain streams. For myself, I do not believe that circumstance has anything to do with whether life is worth having or not. In the first place, I have never seen anyone who does not in some important circumstance long to have his life changed. In the second place, those who measure the worth of life itself by the circumstances in which they must live it are already on the side of inertia.

For life is an elemental essence. It may be contained in a vessel of gold or a clay jar, but the essence within both is exactly the same stuff. Gold does not make it more valuable or clay change its quality. It is immutable. If a man says, "Life is so fine that I shall work for a fine vessel to contain it," then he is possessed by life. If he says, "I don't care what the vessel is, gold or clay, so long as it is brimming with the essence," then also he is possessed by life. But if he throws away his clay jar, the only one he has, merely because it is not gold, and so spills the essence within, then he is either

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a fool or he is already dead in his inertia. In other words, circumstances have nothing to do with the value of life itself. The person who makes this confusion will never find any circumstance good enough for him. He will never value life and he will never be happy in any life. He will be nearest to any happiness possible to him when he has ceased the feeble struggle of his existence and is lost in the inertia which has had its octopus arms around him always.

I suppose there is no one who does not at some point in his philosophy make statements which can be proved by nothing except his own feeling or experience. I make my first one now. I believe that happiness for any individual depends on how clearly he can recognize this dualism in himself and how strongly he can determine that he will consciously choose life and not death. I simply say this, not knowing why I should think life is preferable to death. One of the greatest of human creeds in which millions of people seem to find comfort, is based on the entirely opposite belief, that death is to be sought and life is to be escaped. I do not say it is wrong. All I can say is that I do not believe it.

For myself, I choose life anyhow, anywhere. Whatever my mood or circumstance, I know I choose life. I have at certain times in my life been very poor indeed. There have been times when I surveyed my circumstances and had to acknowledge to myself frankly that every one of them was wrong and that I really had not one thing to make life worth having—and still it was worth having. I have seen too much death to be in the least afraid of it, and yet I do not want any kind of death. I want any kind of life as long as I can have it. Even though I were racked with pain I would find a few free moments between worth having. And I know pain itself may be positively lived.

Is life then merely an attitude of mind toward living? No, it is more than that. The attitude of mind comes as a result of something more primary. And this primary something is the state of being already alive—that is, possessed by the energy of action so that one's being is a positive force in itself, merely by its existence, whatever its circumstance. It means that the being goes out to meet anything and everything new in a spirit of open inquiry and interest, instead of in instant reaction against what is unknown or unaccustomed. It means putting aside circumstances that cannot be changed and living beyond them. It means roving imagination and daring thinking and ready laughter and quick appreciation and intense interests and wide observation. These things have nothing to do with circumstances. A woman tied to a washtub and a man to a machine can possess them all—if they will.

The will is the crux of it, the point at once weakest and strongest in any philosophy. No one knows anything about will, what it is, how to make it, or how it works, or why it works as it does. There is no such thing, of course, as a person without a will. When we say so-and-so has a weak will, we simply mean he wills to do something else—to keep on being drunk or lazy or a slattern. He wills inertia. It is not necessarily the easiest choice. He may suffer a great deal for his will in the loss of affection, public esteem, and such rewards of everyday life which are precious. He may suffer all the inward sorrow of feeling himself a failure and be very lonely. But still he wills the inertia of death because he prefers it.

For I believe, and here is my second statement, that people are what they want most to be. They may not have all they want to have—that is less important, anyway—but they are, in themselves, what they want to be. If they are lazy, they will to be lazy; if they are quarrelsome, they enjoy quarrelling,

and will to quarrel; if they are despondent and recessive, this is the way they best enjoy being and so they will to be, and nothing can be done about it, unless the will can be changed.

Can the will be changed? It depends on the person who possesses it and on nothing else. If he has sufficient intelligence to see himself whole and is a creature of an order high enough, he may be able alone to change his own will and so change himself into what his new will chooses. But most of us are not so intelligent as this and we go through life without ever knowing ourselves at all. If we saw ourselves on the street, we would not recognize our own faces, and if we could be introduced to ourselves, we would say, "A complete stranger—I never saw him before." So how can a person change his will when he is unaware of himself?

There are various means whereby we do sometimes see ourselves suddenly and unexpectedly, and we receive a shock which has results of one kind or another. Some receive this light upon themselves through religion and they wish they were different, and wish may become will if it persists. Sometimes this light upon the self comes through love of another human creature, and wish stirs again to grow into will. Or time itself may do it, and experience may throw the light on self and the will learns to choose.

But still this presupposes the ability to see, for all of this light falls upon every human creature in one way or another, but not all can see what the light reveals. Some cannot see, for there is not intelligence enough to recognize what is seen, and some seeing, refuse to see, and in that act they choose again the inertia which is death. But some do see.

And why should some be willing to see and others refuse to see? Well, this is the question which men have answered in many ways. They have said inheritance dooms us or en-

vironment shapes us or God predestines us. The fatalist says there is no help for us—if we are born to life we will live alive, and if we are born to death, we will live dead. But all this is to deny freedom to the individual since time began.

And so here is my third statement. I believe we are born free—free of inheritance in that we can by our wills determine to be free of it, free of environment because no environment can shape forever one who will not be shaped. We are born free, in other words, of every sort of predestination. In each of us there is a little germ of individual being, compounded, it may be, of everything, inheritance, environment and all else, but the compound itself is new. It is forever unique. This *I* is never *You* or *He*. And this *I* is free, if I only know it and act upon that freedom.

Does this make a philosophy? Such as it is, it is all I have. When we are born, here is the world, composed of life and death. That life or death we must choose, for there is nothing else. We are free, except choose we must, for time compels the choice.

Does this choice persist beyond what we know of time? Who knows? To die is an end, perhaps, but who can tell the end of him who chooses to live?

# Stuart Chase

Stuart Chase has taken large areas of the social sciences, particularly in the domain of economics, and translated them into vigorous and stirring prose which has captured the popular imagination in America. As an expositor and social critic he wields a large and justly increasing influence in his own country, both through his occasional journalism and the steady stream of books that has flowed from his pen.

He was born in Somersworth, New Hampshire, in 1888. He attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1907-08, and graduated, cum laude, from Harvard in 1910 (the class of Lippmann, John Reed, etc.). He joined his father's firm of public accountants, the Harvey S. Chase Company of Boston, and served as a partner until 1917. From 1917 through 1921, he investigated the food packing industry, under the Federal Trade Commission and the Food Administration. Since 1922 he has been director of the Labour Bureau, a non-profit research organization. His home is in Georgetown, Connecticut, where he is one of the community's best tennis players. His books are "The Tragedy of Waste" (1925); "Your Money's Worth," with F. J. Schlink (1927), "Men and Machines" (1929); "Prosperity—Fact or Myth?" (1929); "The Nemesis of American Business" (1931); "Mexico" (1931); "A New Deal" (1932); "The Economy of Abundance" (1934); "Government in Business" (1935); "Rich Land, Poor Land" (1936); "The Tyranny of Words" (1938); "The New Western Front" (1939).



# Stuart Chase

## I

**I** TAKE IT one's living philosophy is a somewhat different kettle of fish from one's formal philosophy. I take it a living philosophy is a label for that collection of beliefs and opinions which tends to guide one's conscious decisions.

Perhaps as good a way as any other to formulate my living philosophy is to reconstruct some actual situations, and note how I reacted to them. This is taking a leaf from modern physics. P. W. Bridgman says that physicists now tend to define their concepts in terms of operations or experiments performed. "Length" and "time" are no longer regarded as absolutes; their meaning comes from what one does with clocks and meter sticks. The concept grows out of the experiment.

I will now perform seven operations based on my own experience. I think they will indicate my living philosophy better than an elevating essay about what I think people ought to believe. In most of the stories, I appear to have behaved fairly well. I could tell twice as many stories more damaging to my self-esteem, but besides being painful to the author, these would not illustrate any philosophy at all.

For sixteen hours in the day, I am faced with decisions which determine my behaviour as a biological item on this planet. This behaviour in turn determines how long I am to survive as a biological item. Happily, many decisions are automatically made for me by a nervous system well adapted to defend the

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organism from meddling by the conscious mind. Without these sheltered reactions, I should have been dead long ago. Only this morning I escaped a nasty fall from a stone wall by unconsciously thrusting out an arm to regain balance.

Another long list of decisions is made for me by the customs and folkways of my tribe. One does not go to a dinner party in a bathing suit, hot as the evening may be. One does not get up in the middle of a lecture and tell the speaker what a terrible bore he is, truthful as such a remark might be.

Many conscious decisions not inexorably determined by the folkways remain. For these I stop and think. Signs come in from the world outside—light waves, sound waves, tactile pressures. I revolve them somehow in my cortex, then act. If I fail to act, that also is a decision. Why do I act or react *thus*, rather than *so*? Why do I throw *this* letter into the wastebasket, and spend two hours composing an answer to *that* letter, both being on the same subject? Why do I agree to serve on this committee and refuse that one? My living philosophy is manifested in these decisions. Let us now examine seven specific cases.

## II

I am driving along a country road at night. My headlights are tilted for maximum visibility. I see a pair of lights approaching, half a mile away. When the distance between us is halved, I touch a button with my foot, and dim my headlights. Not so in the other car. It sweeps by with a soft, powerful phut, blinding me as it goes. "You poor damned so and so!" I shout to the night air, as I touch the button and extend the lights again.

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Hullo, here is another car, blazing down the road. What is this misbegotten troglodyte going to do? I know what *I* am going to do. I am going to give him the works. That last Devonian ape man was the third in a row. Am I to devote my life to protecting hairy anthropoids who should be swinging from limb to limb? Here he is. Going like Halley's comet. I could run over every dog, child, and old lady in Fairfield County in the road shadow cast by that aurora borealis.

*What?* He's dimmed them, although a bulb is missing in his dimmers. A gentleman and a scholar. And here are my lights going at full blast! I reach for the button, but in my haste hit the accelerator instead, and so give my friend not only a hideous glare, but the rudeness, not to say danger, of higher speed while passing him.

I am alone now in the darkness. As a kind of penance, I drive a few miles at thirty with the dimmers on. Of all idiots, I am the world's loftiest. Trying to take the spleen generated by A, B, and C out on D. D is not C; he is not B, he is not A. D is to A, B, and C as Shakespeare is to Elbert Hubbard, Arthur Brisbane, and Dr. Frank Crane.

Just a minute, now. Elbert Hubbard had his moments before big business got him. Perhaps C had a foot button and broke it. Perhaps he was an unemployed carpenter in a 1922 Reo which cost him £15, going to Bridgeport in the forlorn hope of getting a job on the new PWA housing project. Even if he were president of the Stock Exchange, that is no reason why I should take out my displeasure on an ornament of civilization like D. I might have killed D. What lesson would that have preached to C or A, strung out along Route 58, happy as lightning bugs, burning the eyeballs out of everyone they passed?

What am I going to do now? I am going to press that

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button for every car I meet, until I get home. I don't care if it is Al Capone breaking out of jail, or Goebbels rushing to a secret meeting of the Bund. Forty thousand dead on the roads of America last year, and most of them at night.

A trivial decision, true. Yet this nightly intercourse which millions of us experience involves life and death, man as a social animal, the organization of society in the power age, the engineering of roads, automotive design. It involves hospitals and public health, the consumption of alcohol, and the question whether a biological species, geared to four miles an hour on its legs, can adjust itself to twenty times that rate and survive indefinitely.

## III

A few years ago I was in Odessa. I spoke no Russian, and English-speaking guides were rare. Finally I was informed at my hotel that just the right man was waiting in the lobby. His English was indeed excellent. He talked like the Prince of Wales. This was the more extraordinary because my guide wore blue overalls, and was a coal-black Negro. As an American, I do not expect Negroes to speak like Oxford graduates. I expect them to speak like Senators from Alabama.

We went to the docks, to rest houses for workers that were once palaces for the rich along the Black Sea Riviera, to factories, stores, beaches, and to the famous stone steps down which the Cossacks had charged and massacred in 1904. My guide asked me to come home to lunch with him. I was born north of the Mason and Dixon line, and therefore I accepted, especially as he said his wife could make the best *borsch* in Odessa.

We went to his house—very neat, very poor. His wife came

out, wiping her hands on an apron, and smiling a welcome. "Hul-lo," she said. That was her only word of English. She was a comely Russian girl, whiter than I am. I steadied myself against the door. The happy pair beamed at each other and at me. I looked apprehensively for children, but none appeared.

While we ate the admirable *borsch* with tin spoons, my guide explained his household. He came originally from Jamaica. He had been a stoker on a British freighter which sailed from Odessa in a hurry during the civil war, leaving him behind. Negroes were rare in Odessa, and the Soviet authorities made much of him. They got him a job in the local power plant. Then, because he seemed lonely, they found him a wife. The difficulties of mating black with white never seemed to enter anybody's head. His wife was a school teacher. She loved her husband, and was very proud of him. No other girl in Odessa had such a distinctive husband, who could talk beautiful English besides.

I was far from Atlanta, or even from New York. I could only turn a mental somersault, eat the *borsch* and the butterless grey bread, and accept without comment what a great city of half a million people accepted.

If one intelligent black man and one intelligent white woman can live happily together, proud of each other, in Odessa, why cannot the same thing happen anywhere else? The answer to that is easy; because other places, such as Atlanta, Georgia, are *not* Odessa. Folklore changes in space and in time. Well, suppose folklore about race were unified all over the world. Could black men and white women, or black women and white men, mate as naturally as white and black horses, without ill-effects on themselves or on their brown children? Is it *all* a matter of folklore? The answer to that is harder. The

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deeper the biologists dig into the matter, the more racial differences *which count* seem to recede. Professor Haldane, concludes from the evidence that racial differences occurred in superficial characteristics to begin with, such as skin colouring or hair texture, and that so much interbreeding has taken place since that most notions about racial purity are moonshine.

## IV

From Odessa we jump halfway round the globe, to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Not far from that town, the Rio Puerco comes down from the high mountains of the north to join the Rio Grande. I am out with a group of technicians from the United States Soil Conservation Service. They drive me around a 30,000-acre project on the arid plain. They explain that the number of grazing sheep has been limited to the carrying capacity of the grass, and that both mechanical and biological controls are being tried, to hold the soil against wind and water erosion. A wire fence separates the controlled area from the rest of the plain. The difference between the two sides of the fence is striking. On the project side the grama grass grows tall and strong; on the other side it is sparse, brown, and weak, with wide sandy patches between the drooping clumps.

We drive down to the banks of the Rio Puerco, beyond the controlled area. The river was once a clear stream in a shallow, narrow bed. It fed many little irrigation projects of the Pueblo Indians. Look at it now. The water is thick as pea soup, and there is very little of it. The narrow channel has widened in places to half a mile, cut into horrible quaking clay canyons by the silt. Flash floods come down, tearing out bridges, cover-

ing the irrigated lands with gravel, destroying the ancient economy of the pueblos. Grazing lands topple into this loathsome abyss an acre at a time. Between the floods, the river may dry up completely. The underground water table of the whole valley is sinking fast.

What has happened to bring this desolation? Overgrazing on the plain; overcutting and fire on the timbered head waters in the mountains. White men have overturned the balance of natural forces, wrecking in a few years what it took millennia to build. I feel as if smoldering volcanoes were at work, preparing to blast living things out of this land altogether. Against them stand the men of the Conservation Service, but they are still few, and the ruin is great.

I look around the broad valley. The mountain wall is white with snow, for it is early March. The sun is bright and warm. The cloud streamers across the sky are of that indescribable luminosity which only New Mexico knows. This world has been here a long time. This vulture wheeling above us has been here a long time; that antelope we saw through the glasses has been here a long time. Vulture and antelope and Indian accept this world. We palefaces have refused to accept it. We saw a cash return in it. The cash was there for a few years but the forces of nature are in delicate equilibrium in the arid lands of the South-west. From a life-giving stream, this river has become a horror. Another generation of neglect, and paleface, Indian, antelope, and bird must go.

Money loss, crop loss, water loss, game loss—these are practical problems, but I do not have to face them, living two thousand miles away. I am facing another problem, a philosophical problem, if you will. I am a creature of this earth, and so a part of these prairies, these mountains, these rivers and clouds. Unless I feel this dependence, I may know all the

calculus and all the Talmud, but I have not learned the first lesson of living on this earth.

If there is fire in your house, you fight it. If there is death along the Rio Puerco, you fight that, as these men beside me are fighting. I go back to my hotel and wire that I will accept an invitation to give a talk on conservation, at a place I did not want to go to, and at a time which is very inconvenient.

## V

I am lying on a lonely beach under the Florida sun. The Gulf beyond the breakers is the colour of milky jade. A man in a pink silk shirt comes up and sits down on the sand beside me. He is not a prepossessing man. "That's a nice tan you've got," he says. I do not like the way he says it. I do not like the way he looks at me.

"So, so," I say.

"Are you married?"

"Yes."

He continues to look at me, more and more strangely. Suddenly I am filled with rage. I clench my fists under me. I look him in the eye.

"I have two children."

"Oh," says the man. He gets up from the sand, brushes off his not too clean flannels, and walks away.

There is a round stone on the beach by my hand. I have a hot impulse to pick it up and throw it at his retreating pink shirt. I tell myself to wait a minute.

I look at the man again. He is limping. One leg is obviously shorter than the other. His face was plain as a picket fence. Putting these two facts together, I begin to picture a crippled boy who was never asked to parties, at whom the girls turned



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up their noses, who was a nuisance to overworked parents, who was met at every turn in life with frustration, if not contempt.

The anger goes out of me, though the disgust remains. I begin to reconstruct my scanty scientific knowledge of homosexuals. Some of them are born so. Indeed, all of us are born with both so-called male and female characteristics. When the male predominate, we are boys; when the female, we are girls; when they are equally divided, we balance feebly on the edge. We can no more help it than a moth can help flying into a lantern. Boys who are not strongly male to begin with may be driven over to the other side, by being shunned by girls, by being constantly thwarted or repressed. Or they may be corrupted by older men and boys who in turn have been driven over to the abnormal side. This is not a matter of morals, but a matter of chromosomes or psychological conditioning, or both.

Homosexuals are born so many per hundred thousand, like albinos or left-handed persons. Some borderline cases can be reversed by a good psychiatrist. Perhaps homosexual tendencies are a kind of sickness, a deficiency disease.

I roll over on my back and watch a diving gull making a white streak from blue sky to jade sea. Sick gulls die quickly. Only the healthy survive. The sick children of men are tolerated and many are restored by medical invention. It is not nature's way, but it is a kind way and worth trying. The pink shirt is far down the beach now. Why throw stones at biology?

## VI

I have written a speech in the course of which I say:  
"America will never tolerate Fascism: democracy is too deeply

imbedded in the national consciousness." I put the manuscript aside, and pick up the day's mail. A correspondent has sent me a quotation; Hegel's definition of love. "Love is the ideality of the relativity of the reality of an infinitesimal portion of the absolute totality of the Infinite Being."

This sounds alarmingly like nonsense, but the reputation of Hegel is profound. Let me see if I can squeeze some meaning from it. "Love" is the name for an emotion which takes many forms—the love of man for woman, of woman for child, of friend for friend, of disciple for master, of man for country. Hegel does not say which kind he is talking about. "Ideality" is an abstraction so high I lose it in the stratosphere. "Relativity" is a useful label in many contexts, but Einstein has warned that the context must be precise. The "relativity of the reality" is anything but precise.

But perhaps Hegel meant something definite. Whatever he meant, he was unable to communicate it to me. I doubt if it has ever been communicated to anyone. The verbal structure itself forbids communication. I could spend my life contemplating this string of symbols and receive no more reward than in contemplating "X is the A of the B of the C of an infinitesimal portion of the D of the E."

So I cease to contemplate it. I pass it up. I pass up all such talk, from Aristotle to Spengler. It saves a lot of time. But the talk of Einstein and Planck I do not pass up. I do not understand all of it, but I know that by diligence I could come to understand it. The symbols connect with real things. The talk checks with observable phenomena. Nobody can do anything but obfuscate himself with Hegel's symbols about love. With the symbols of Maxwell's field equations, one can build 100,000-horsepower generators and send electric power hurtling over the wires from Boulder Dam to Los Angeles.

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In reading, in listening, I try to separate talk which goes round and round from talk which refers to something definite in the world outside my head.

I return to the manuscript of my speech. With a soft pencil I draw a thick black line through the sentence about Fascism and the national consciousness of America. Perhaps Hegel could understand it, but I cannot.

## VII

The telephone rings. I lift the receiver.

"Yes, this is Mr. Chase. . . ."

"Yes, I wrote that book. . . ."

"That's very flattering. . . ."

"Yes, I am interested in writing other things. . . ."

"What kind of copy? . . ."

"Well, I'm damned!"

I jerk the receiver back on the hook. Presently the buzzer rings again, but I do not answer it.

This decision was almost as fast a reaction as the knee jerk. By it I lost a contract for a fabulous sum per week, to write advertising copy for a patent medicine that I had exposed as worthless, on the testimony of the American Medical Association.

Give me no credit for renouncing the fabulous sum. I did not need it. My book was selling very well. But what made me violate the folkways of the telephone, and hang up on a man who was making me a handsome offer? As well as I could analyse it, it was a feeling of nausea about the integrity of communication among American business men. I had made and proved certain statements. These statements, in the form

of a book, had produced a financial return. The man on the other end of the telephone—he was a very big shot indeed—saw nothing amiss in asking me to contradict the statements for a larger financial return. He seemed to think that writers sold words as he sold patent medicines, on the basis of all the traffic would bear.

When people are locked together in an interdependent economic machine, the price of tolerable existence is clear communication. Otherwise the machine cannot be operated. What sort of army would it be, where the colonel twisted the words of the general, the major twisted the words of the colonel, the captain those of the major, and the petty officers those of the captain?

Persons who set themselves up as writers and word dealers have a special responsibility in the power age. If they cannot be trusted to talk honestly, who can be trusted? If they can be sold out to the highest bidder like hogs on the hoof, where is an interdependent culture going to land?

This, I think, was the reason why I hung up the receiver. The modern world is confusing enough, even if everyone were quiet, I want to get the truest news I can about the world, from those in a position to report this part of it or that. My survival may depend on it. *Per contra* I want to give the truest news I can. It is something like driving a car. That unspeakable tycoon wanted to pay me for driving at seventy miles an hour on the wrong side of the road, smashing up other people and smashing myself.

## VIII

He is waiting for me in the lobby of the building where I have an office. His face is haggard. "What is it now?" I ask. For eight years I have listened to his sad stories of a promis-

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ing mechanical invention and a possible fortune, wrecked by fast-moving patent attorneys, broken contracts, failing friends, and above all, by a deepening business depression.

"Have you five minutes to spare?" he asks.

I hesitate. I know that five minutes means probably an hour, and I am hoping to catch a train. He goes on talking.

"I had to decide Monday whether I would jump out of a window or go on relief."

"I see that you decided right."

"I don't know. The shame of it is killing me."

I can take a later train. If he had brought good news, I would have dodged the interview.

"Come on up." I say. We go silently into the elevator.

I close the door and sit down at my desk. His eyes shift wretchedly about the little room.

"Has it been your fault?" I ask.

"No. I don't think so. Not altogether, anyway. It's this depression. Nobody has any money. People haven't done the things they said they'd do. They couldn't. I couldn't get anywhere without capital. I couldn't manufacture the thing and sell it with my bare hands. I hung on as long as I could. You know that. Mortgaged everything. Since I saw you last, I've tried for any kind of a job. Washing windows, selling insurance, anything. I suppose I'm no good. I was once. Still, I don't see how it's all my fault."

"It isn't your fault. Look at it this way. In 1929, forty-eight million people in America had jobs. They were making their own way. They were good workers; they couldn't be accused of failure. To-day only forty million of them have jobs, many of those at lower pay than in 1929. How could eight million people turn into bums and loafers almost overnight?"

"No. It doesn't make sense."

"Of course it doesn't. You've got plenty of company. There are about twenty million American men, women, and children on relief. The banks are on relief. The railroads are on relief. If it weren't for the R.F.C., they'd be busted wide open. You aren't up against personal failure. You're up against the failure of a whole economic system. Take your relief money and spend it. You've got it coming to you, and the spending helps the rest of us."

"You really think I have it coming to me?"

"Certainly. On two counts: first, on the ancient principle of group survival; second, on the modern principle that spending is as important as producing, in an economy of abundance. If relief were shut off, a sixth of the American population would starve to death. Not only that, but the loss of their spending, which runs into billions in the aggregate, would finish wrecking an economy geared to making and selling the things they now consume. If you should all jump out of windows, instead of going on relief, the rest of us would have a depression which would make 1932 look like a Vanderbilt garden party."

"That makes me feel a little better. But where's it all going to end? The Government can't afford it indefinitely."

"Perhaps the Government can't afford it, but the American continent can. By that I mean Government bonds may some day cease to be valuable, but there are enough fields, mines, oil wells, factories, power plants, and machines in the United States to give us all a good living. That's what counts in the end. We aren't going to throw up our hands and sink for the third time, with good solid life rafts all around us."

"But how are we going to grab those rafts?"

"Well, you're grabbing one now. We can't 'afford' relief,

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but we've got it. Germany couldn't afford to rearm, but she did. Italy couldn't afford to conquer Ethiopia, but she conquered it. Russia couldn't afford a Five-Year Plan, but the factories, dams, and schools were built to schedule. England could never leave the gold standard without instant disaster, but she left it and began to prosper. What is impossible for bankers is becoming increasingly possible for engineers. Group survival is more important than a balanced budget."

"So you don't think we're going all to hell?"

"No. We are in for a rough transition period. But I think, if a given community has enough resources, technical skill, man power, and physical plant, the chances are it will find a way to eat what is already on the shelf. If that horrifies the bankers, it's too bad."

"I feel a lot better. I'm going to apply for one of those W.P.A. engineering research jobs. You don't mind shaking hands with a poor bum on relief?"

He held out his hand, with the first real smile I had seen on his face in years. I smiled, too.

"I may be with you any time. No one's job, no one's income, is sure to-day."

## IX

These are all true stories. They show my reactions and decisions in seven specific situations. The reader is perhaps in a better position to construct my living philosophy from these experiments than I am myself. To me it seems that I tend to be guided in conscious decisions by four criteria:

1. That I am a creature of this earth. (The Rio Puerco case.)

2. That I am a member of a human group. (The headlight case, the telephone case, the relief case.)

3. That it is meaningless to judge other members of the group until the biological and psychological facts are in. (The Florida case, the Odessa case.)

4. That progress depends, not on revealed authority, not on ethics and morals, which shift with the folkways, but on using the scientific attitude in social as well as in physical affairs. (There is more than a hint of this in all the cases. I am not much of a scientist, but I feel myself constantly groping for the kind of knowledge, the kind of decision, that stays put.)

Every human being is confronted with two major tasks: to establish a relation with the physical environment in which he is rooted as deeply as any oak, and to establish a relation with his fellow-creatures.

The physical environment, in the sense of fresh air to breathe, cannot be neglected five minutes. In the sense of the balance of soils and waters, the penalties of neglect are less immediately apparent. But in the end, retribution is sure and terrible. Look at the dust bowl, at the Yellow River, at the blasted lands of Asia Minor.

If people were not members of a group, they would not be human. Stripped of his group, a man becomes as helpless as if he were stripped of his nervous system. If this truism of anthropology were better appreciated, there would be less silly talk about individualism and rugged independence. We cannot get away from other men, and wouldn't if we could. One of the significant things about the explorers of North America is that they edged their way through the wilderness, not in splendid isolation, as we like to think, but with the invaluable assistance of one Indian tribe after another.

How large the group should be for healthy survival becomes an increasingly interesting question. The dangers of inbreed-



ing tend to fix a minimum size, while economic interdependence to-day indicates a much greater maximum than hitherto. Already, a good part of a continent must be integrated, if men are to be supplied with a reasonable budget of necessities and comforts. Even the three million square miles of the United States do not furnish quite all the raw materials for that budget. Some day a Great Society may swing around the whole world. With the planet as the group unit, the only kind of war possible would be civil war. With poverty liquidated through the universal application of the technical arts, civil wars would be rare.

Large or small, if one is perforce a member of a group, it is a good idea to realize it, and play ball. I find the easiest way to play ball is to analyse what makes my fellow players act the way they do. Which of their more infuriating characteristics has been fixed by inheritance; which built in by early conditioning; which determined by custom and the folkways?

Finally, I admit to a deep conviction that progress is attainable through the methods of science. These methods have changed the face of the world since Bruno died at the stake to witness them, three centuries ago. The applications of science have quadrupled the population of Western civilization and greatly improved its health, released twenty billions of man power of energy from coal, falling water, and oil, created a vast collectivized, interlocked culture. This is enough to indicate that the scientific method works, and that its laws and techniques are very powerful medicine indeed.

The beginning is auspicious, but the world has not got around. In 1939, most literate persons use the products of science continuously, but have little conception of the discipline. They still cling to revealed authority, and the revelations clash. Their minds are littered with ideological concepts

incapable of verification. They subscribe passionately to Nazi dogma, Marxist dogma, Fascist dogma, Christian dogma, Jewish dogma, Mohammedan dogma, racial dogma, *laissez faire* dogma, property dogma, money dogma, and even dogma about political democracy. My dogma is eternally right, and your dogma is eternally wrong. As a result, they are constantly in each other's hair, fighting about ghostly matters. The more lettered they are, the tougher the grip on authority, the more agile the logic, the fiercer the dogma.

Once a person acquires a scientific attitude, dogma begins to melt out of his mind, like an ice-field melting in the sun. The scientific attitude reverses the older thought channels. Facts come first. Then one employs his reason to draw inferences from the facts. No facts, no useful concepts. The dogmatist uses his reason—and very powerful it often is—to select or torture the facts in support of his ideology. Dogma first, facts second.

The shore line of history, to use the eloquent language of historians, is littered with the wrecks of civilizations. I will not list them, for the recital is getting to be tiresome. Perhaps civilizations are too much for *homo sapiens* altogether. Perhaps we shall have to go back to gathering coconuts and spearing fish. But two observations are in order. When civilizations have fallen in the past, others have sprung up. We keep on trying. This is encouraging. Secondly, there has never been a civilization like the present one, built on inanimate energy and mathematical equations, with stations all over the world. If Europe's civilization is blotted out, America remains. If Europe and America are blotted out, Australasia and South Africa remain.

More cheerful than blotting out is the hope that the members of a culture founded on science will gradually be

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inculcated with the scientific attitude. For a few hours in the day, a few days in the year, millions of us are already capable of it. Can that small margin be extended, so that we can climb and hold on, and climb again? I do not know. But my hope is strong.

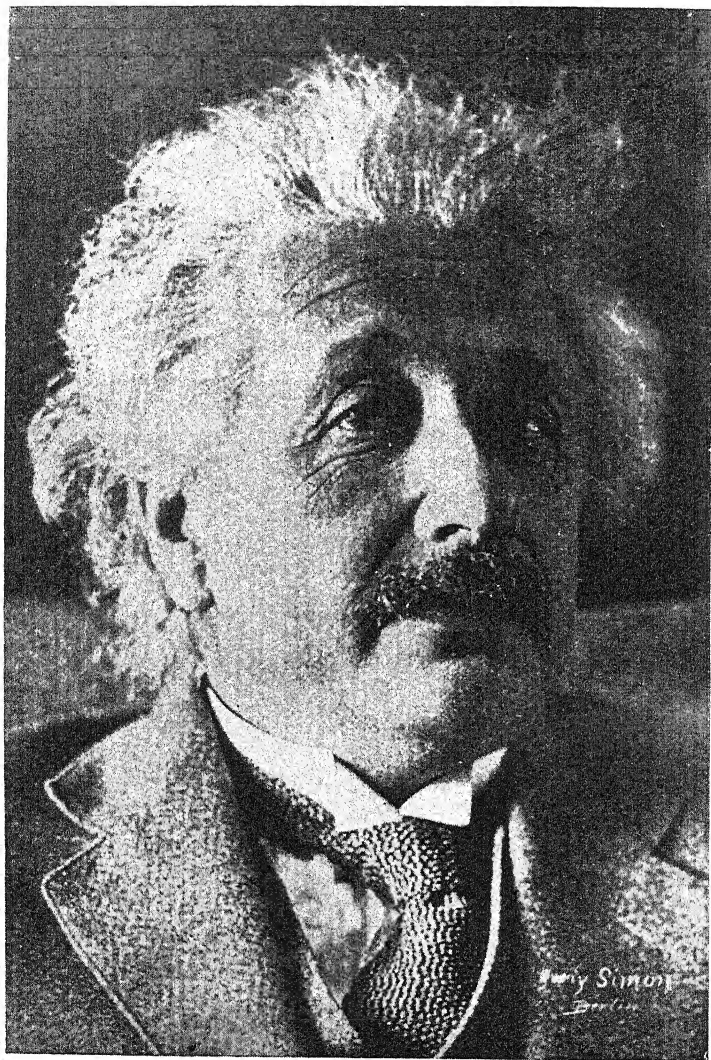


Albert Einstein

*Albert Einstein, winner of the Nobel Prize and author of the "theory of relativity," is generally ranked as among the greatest of scientists, living or dead—certainly the greatest of the living. A German Jew, he is now exiled from the land to which by his labours he brought distinction and honour, and has made his home permanently in the United States. Born in 1879 he was formerly Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Physik in Berlin, and Professor of Physics at the Prussian Academy of Science. He won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921, and was presented with the Copley Medal of the Royal Society in 1925. Despite his enormous contribution to scientific knowledge his writings are few. "Relativity" was issued in English translation in 1920; and in 1929 he published "Ein Einheitlichen Feldtheorie." With Sigmund Freud in 1933 he collaborated in a book translated into English under the title "Why War?," published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd.*



STUART CHASE



ALBERT EINSTEIN



# Albert Einstein

**S**TRANGE IS OUR situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose.

From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: that man is here for the sake of other men—above all for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labours of my fellow-men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received. My peace of mind is often troubled by the depressing sense that I have borrowed too heavily from the work of other men.

I do not believe we can have any freedom at all in the philosophical sense, for we act not only under external compulsion but also by inner necessity. Schopenhauer's saying—"A man can surely do what he wills to do, but he cannot determine what he wills"—impressed itself upon me in youth and has always consoled me when I have witnessed or suffered life's hardships. This conviction is a perpetual breeder of tolerance, for it does not allow us to take ourselves or others too seriously; it makes rather for a sense of humour.

To ponder interminably over the reason for one's own existence or the meaning of life in general seems to me, from an objective point of view, to be sheer folly. And yet everyone holds certain ideals by which he guides his aspiration and his

judgment. The ideals which have always shone before me and filled me with the joy of living are goodness, beauty, and truth. To make a goal of comfort or happiness has never appealed to me; a system of ethics built on this basis would be sufficient only for a herd of cattle.

Without the sense of collaborating with like-minded beings in the pursuit of the ever unattainable in art and scientific research, my life would have been empty. Ever since childhood I have scorned the commonplace limits so often set upon human ambition. Possession, outward success, publicity, luxury—to me these have always been contemptible. I believe that a simple and unassuming manner of life is best for everyone, best both for the body and the mind.

My passionate interest in social justice and social responsibility has always stood in curious contrast to a marked lack of desire for direct association with men and women. I am a horse for single harness, not cut out for tandem or team work. I have never belonged wholeheartedly to country or state, to my circle of friends, or even to my own family. These ties have always been accompanied by a vague aloofness, and the wish to withdraw into myself increases with the years.

Such isolation is sometimes bitter, but I do not regret being cut off from the understanding and sympathy of other men. I lose something by it, to be sure, but I am compensated for it in being rendered independent of the customs, opinions, and prejudices of others, and am not tempted to rest my peace of mind upon such shifting foundations.

My political ideal is democracy. Everyone should be respected as an individual, but no one idolized. It is an irony of fate that I should have been showered with so much un-called-for and unmerited admiration and esteem. Perhaps this adulation springs from the unfulfilled wish of the multitude

to comprehend the few ideas which I, with my weak powers, have advanced.

Full well do I know that in order to attain any definite goal it is imperative that *one* person should do the thinking and commanding and carry most of the responsibility. But those who are led should not be driven, and they should be allowed to choose their leader. It seems to me that the distinctions separating the social classes are false; in the last analysis they rest on force. I am convinced that degeneracy follows every autocratic system of violence, for violence inevitably attracts moral inferiors. Time has proved that illustrious tyrants are succeeded by scoundrels.

For this reason I have always been passionately opposed to such regimes as exist in Russia, Germany, and Italy to-day. The thing which has discredited the European forms of democracy is not the basic theory of democracy itself, which some say is at fault, but the instability of our political leadership, as well as the impersonal character of party alignments.

What is truly valuable in our bustle of life is not the nation, I should say, but the creative and impressionable individuality, the personality—he who produces the noble and sublime while the common herd remains dull in thought and insensible in feeling.

This subject brings me to that vilest offspring of the herd mind—the odious militia. The man who enjoys marching in line and file to the strains of music falls below my contempt; he received his great brain by mistake—the spinal cord would have been amply sufficient. This heroism at command, this senseless violence, this accursed bombast of patriotism—how intensely I despise them! War is low and despicable, and I had rather be smitten to shreds than participate in such doings.

Such a stain on humanity should be erased without delay.

## I BELIEVE

I think well enough of human nature to believe that it would have been wiped out long ago had not the common sense of nations been systematically corrupted through school and press for business and political reasons.

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed. This insight into the mystery of life, coupled though it be with fear, has also given rise to religion. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling, is at the centre of true religiousness. In this sense, and in this sense only, I belong in the ranks of devoutly religious men.

I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modelled after our own—a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty. Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbour such thoughts through fear or ridiculous egotism. It is enough for me to contemplate the mystery of conscious life perpetrating itself through all eternity, to reflect upon the marvellous structure of the universe which we can dimly perceive, and to try humbly to comprehend even an infinitesimal part of the intelligence manifested in nature.

## POSTSCRIPT

Reading these lines once again after a considerable interval, I receive two strangely contrasting impressions. What I wrote

still seems essentially as true as ever; yet, it all seems curiously remote and strange. How can that be? Has the world changed so profoundly, or is it merely that I have grown some years older, and my eyes see everything in a changed, dimmer light? What are these years in the history of humanity? Must not all those forces that determine the life of man be regarded as constant compared with such a trifling interval? Is my critical reason so susceptible that the physiological change in my body during these years has been able to influence my concept of life so deeply? It seems clear to me that such considerations cannot throw light upon a change in the emotional approach to the general problems of life. Nor may the reasons for this curious change be sought in my own external circumstances; for I know that these have always played a subordinate part in my thoughts and emotions.

No; something quite different is involved. During these years confidence in the stability, yes, even the very basis for existence, of human society has largely vanished. One senses not only a threat to man's cultural heritage, but also that a lower value is placed upon all that one would like to see defended at all costs.

Conscious man, to be sure, has at all times been keenly aware that life is an adventure, that life must, forever, be wrested from death. In part the dangers were external: one might fall downstairs and break one's neck, lose one's livelihood without fault, be condemned though innocent, or ruined by calumny. Life in human society meant dangers of all sorts; but these dangers were chaotic in nature, subject to chance. Human society, as a whole, seemed stable. Measured by the ideals of taste and morals it was decidedly imperfect. But, all in all, one felt at home with it and, apart from the many kinds of accidents, comparatively safe in it. One accepted its intrinsic

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qualities as a matter of course, as the air one breathed. Even standards of virtue, aspiration, and practical truth were taken for granted as an inviolable heritage, common to all civilized humanity.

To be sure, the World War had already shaken this feeling of security. The sanctity of life vanished and the individual was no longer able to do as he pleased and to go where he liked. The lie was raised to the dignity of a political instrument. The War was, however, widely regarded as an external event, hardly or not at all as the result of man's conscious, planful action. It was thought of as an interruption of man's normal life from the outside, universally considered unfortunate and evil. The feeling of security in regard to human aims and values remained, for the main part, unshaken.

The subsequent development is sharply marked by political events that are not as far-reaching as the less easily grasped socio-psychological background. First a brief, promising step forward characterized by the creation of the League of Nations through the grandiose initiative of Wilson, and the establishment of a system of collective security among the nations. Then the formation of Fascist states, attended by a series of broken pacts and undisguised acts of violence against humanity and against weaker nations. The system of collective security collapsed like a house of cards—a collapse the consequences of which cannot be measured even to-day. It was a manifestation of weakness of character and lack of responsibility on the part of the leaders in the affected countries, and of short-sighted selfishness in the democracies—those that still remain outwardly intact—which prevented any vigorous counter attack.

Things grew even worse than a pessimist of the deepest dye would have dared prophesy. In Europe to the east of the

Rhine free exercise of the intellect exists no longer, the population is terrorized by gangsters who have seized power, and youth is poisoned by systematic lies. The pseudo-success of political adventurers has dazzled the rest of the world; it becomes apparent everywhere that this generation lacks the strength and force which enabled previous generations to win, in painful struggle and at great sacrifice, the political and individual freedom of man.

Awareness of this state of affairs overshadows every hour of my present existence, while ten years ago it did not yet occupy my thoughts. It is this that I feel so strongly in re-reading the words written in the past.

And yet I know that, all in all, man changes but little, even though prevailing notions make him appear in a very different light at different times, and even though current trends like the present bring him unimaginable sorrow. Nothing of all that will remain but a few pitiful pages in the history books, briefly picturing to the youth of future generations the follies of its ancestors.





Havelock Ellis

*Havelock Ellis's recent death in July, 1939, ended a career of great variety and brilliance. He has been called "the most civilized Englishman living to-day." His reputation is based largely on his monumental studies in the psychology of sex, but his active and enlightening mind has reached out to encompass a dozen other fields. Notable are his studies in literature and in the character of nations.*

*Henry Havelock Ellis was born in Croydon, Surrey, in 1859, descended on both sides from seafaring families. He was educated in private schools and at St. Thomas's Hospital. From 1875 to 1879 he taught in New South Wales, Australia. Upon his return to England he qualified as a medical man, but practised only briefly, soon becoming absorbed in scientific and literary work.*

*The list of his publications, those of which he is sole author and those of which he is editor, is too long for complete recapitulation. Among his more notable works the following should be mentioned: "The New Spirit" (1890); "Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters" (1894); "Affirmations" (1897); "The Soul of Spain" (1908); "Impressions and Comments" (1914), Second Series (1921), Third Series (1924); "Little Essays of Love and Virtue" (1922); "The Dance of Life" (1923); "Psychology of Sex: A Manual for Students" (1933); "From Rousseau to Proust" (1936), and his posthumous autobiography (1940).*

# Havelock Ellis

AFTER THE FIRST SHOCK of the demand to state one's philosophical credo the question to put to oneself should be: what *is* a philosophy? It should be, but apparently it seldom is. The victim plunges at random. The professional philosopher is, of course, more cautious. So it is not surprising to find so distinguished a thinker as Professor Dewey, when approached in the matter, pointing out the various senses in which the word "philosophy" may be used.

As I am not a professional in this field, though accustomed to a certain degree of precision in the use of words, I might be tempted to explain what seem to me the various senses in which it may be possible to speak of a "philosophy," thereby indicating in what sense, if any, I myself possess a philosophic credo.

But as that pursuit might lead far I simply assume provisionally the definition, generally assumed by my colleagues in the present task, that one's philosophic credo is the opinions by which a man lives or believes that he lives, though, as may become apparent, I would say, more exactly, that philosophy is the intellectual conception a man forms to himself of the universe. As such it may not directly influence his way of living but it can scarcely fail to affect his attitude to life. But I would not admit that philosophy is one with morality, and while I would agree that even if, for instance, "Honesty is the best policy" makes an admirable rule of life for a tradesman, it cannot properly be regarded as a philosophic creed.

Like many others of my generation, I was brought up in a religious family, and was the eldest child and only son. My mother was not merely conventionally but genuinely religious, belonging to the Evangelical section of the Anglican Church. As a girl she had been considered "volatile" but at the age of seventeen she was "converted" and that event influenced the whole of her subsequent life. Nothing disturbed her firm character which was, however, never harsh, and with increasing years became increasingly tolerant, so that she accepted without protest the varying religious tendencies of her children. My father, a sailor away from home nine months of the year, accepted my mother's religion and decorously went to church with his family every Sunday when at home, but really had no religion of his own. Familiar with many lands and at home with people of all creeds, he was indulgent to all. His own temperament, moreover, was so equable, so free from any tendency to vice or excess, that, liked by everyone, he might be said to be scarcely in need of any religion. I mention these facts because I regard them as of essential importance. A man's philosophy can never be properly apprehended unless we know the foundations for it which he inherited from his parents.

I was mainly my mother's child, whatever tendencies I also inherited from my father. I spontaneously carried a little Testament in my pocket; I read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* all through. I do not mean that I was a goody-goody boy. I was far too reserved to give any indications of my inner attitude to my schoolfellows, and as my companions were not vicious there was no occasion to reveal my own aspirations. In due course I underwent the Church rite of Confirmation, without any sense of incongruity. But meanwhile my insatiable intellectual appetite was leading me to devour books, especially

serious, of all kinds. In this way I was somehow induced to buy a cheap edition of Renan's *Life of Jesus*. It was new to me to see Jesus treated so sympathetically and yet apart from all supernatural elements. I read the book with interest yet critically and I made critical comments on the margins. But Renan's attitude was more congenial to my own temperament than I at first realized. It was not long before books of more or less similar tendency became convincing, and I definitely rejected as intellectually out of court the whole supernatural foundation of Christianity and miraculous theology in general. This led to no active hostility nor to any sense of liberation from restraints. My life remained the same. But I was conscious of loss. The supernatural universe had melted away, and I was without a spiritual home. There were moods of desolation in spite of constant and varied mental activities. This continued from my seventeenth to my nineteenth year. Strauss's *Old Faith and New*, which was to some extent written for the consolation of religious infidels, offered me no comfort at all; it presented a sort of bourgeois spirituality of a completely dull and uninspiring character.

But, about the time when, as a solitary teacher in the Australian bush, I read and threw aside Strauss, I was somehow stimulated to procure James Hinton's *Life in Nature*. I read it and it made no pronounced impression. But it may have touched something in my unconscious mind, for, a few months later, I read it again. This time it produced nothing less than a mental revolution. I still recall the details of that revolution and the day when I walked across the hills, a new being, feeling as light as air, with a new vision, as yet unformulated, of the universe. That moment has influenced the whole of my life.

What had happened to me was what is commonly called

"conversion." But that process is usually misunderstood. It is not the sudden acceptance of a new religion, or a change of life, or anything to do with creeds. It is simply, as the word itself may be said to indicate, a complete psychic change, however produced, and the method of production will vary according to the intellectual and emotional calibre of the person experiencing it. "Conversion" in a John Stuart Mill has little in common with conversion in a costermonger. In my own case, as I later realized, what had happened was that the two psychic spheres, intellectual and emotional, which had been divorced, and in constant active or passive friction, were suddenly united in harmony. Hinton's vision of the universe, even though I could not at every point accept it and would never at any time have considered myself his disciple, presented a universal unity of life which was new to me. The world was no longer dead and repellent; there is the same life everywhere; man and "Nature" are fundamentally one. Henceforth I was at home in the universe. With that realization there came a peace which passes all understanding. I never had any more moods of religious depression.

The revolution remained entirely private; I had no impulse to confide it even to intimate friends and still less to preach it to the world. Perhaps I obscurely felt that such experiences are necessarily personal, under the direction of hereditary and constitutional factors which cannot be transmitted.

It was not until thirty years later that I described this experience in an article on Religion in the *Atlantic Monthly*, afterwards embodied in my *Dance of Life*, and rather more elaborately in the Preface to a reprint of *Life in Nature*. It will be seen that I regarded the experience as religious and not as philosophic, and so I still regard it.

In the years of my mentally formative period I was, how-

ever, much concerned over philosophy. It seemed to me that one ought to have a philosophic system, and I had none. I bought philosophic books, notably Spinoza's complete works in Latin, as well as the standard histories of philosophy of that time. I was a constant reader of the chief English philosophical journal, *Mind*, and I even wrote a rather lengthy article (a study of Hinton's later thought) and sent it to the editor, Professor Croom Robertson, who welcomed it in a friendly spirit, though from a complete stranger, and published it at once. That was in 1884 when I was twenty-five years of age. Almost immediately afterwards I chanced to become personally acquainted with a genuine philosopher and one of the most remarkable men I have ever known. This was Thomas Davidson. The books he left behind are not of the first importance, nor was he indeed so impressive a writer as speaker. He was above all an original personality, of almost passionate philosophic temperament and that eloquence which sometimes marks the Scotch intellect in its more exalted shapes. He was an outsider in philosophy, without academic associations, though attracted to various lines of thought, ancient and modern, and at this period specially interested in Rosmini. He travelled much, was at home in the United States even more than in England, and was frequently to be found in Rome.

Davidson was at this time collecting around him a small band of young men whom he desired to indoctrinate with his opinions and personally lead in the formation of a sort of quasi-communistic establishment in which to carry them out. My friend, Percival Chubb, afterwards known as an ethical leader in the United States, was prominent among them and by him I was introduced to Davidson and joined the little group who listened to his eloquent speech. He told

me later that to me he had been specially drawn, and it was therefore a grievous disappointment for him, after he had expounded his doctrines during a long evening with, as he himself put it, all the unction he could command, to find next day that I, who had seemed to drink in eagerly all his eloquence, had really remained completely unmoved. He had misunderstood my temperament. I willingly and even sympathetically listen to arguments, but that does not mean acceptance or agreement. Davidson was so disgusted at my failure to exhibit the response he desired that a little later in a letter from Rome he broke off relations with me. At a later period, however, when there was no longer any question of my becoming a disciple, occasional friendly relations were resumed. The outcome of this episode doubtless seemed to Davidson entirely negative.

But it was far from being negative for me, or I should not have felt called upon to introduce it here. It had a very positive result, though one that would have been by no means pleasing to Davidson. It convinced me that philosophy is a purely personal matter. A genuine philosopher's credo is the outcome of a single complex personality: it cannot be transferred. No two persons, if sincere, can have the same philosophy.

While I made this discovery for myself, a few years later, when I began to study Nietzsche, I found that he had vaguely suggested a similar viewpoint. It was in my essay on Nietzsche in 1896 that I clearly set forth my attitude: "It is as undignified to think another man's philosophy as to wear another man's cast-off clothes.—Let Brown be a Brownite and Robinson a Robinsonian. It is not good that they should exchange their philosophies, or that either should insist on thrusting his threadbare misfits on Jones, who prefers to be metaphysically



naked. When men have generally begun to realize this the world will be a richer and an honester world and a pleasanter one as well."

Though I made the discovery for myself, nowadays of course it is quite taken for granted. It has, for instance, been recently stated clearly by Bertrand Russell: "The logical quality of the cosmos as it appears in each of the great systems is due to the fact that it is one man's cosmos." But even for Bertrand Russell this attitude seems to be recent.

It must have been shortly after the Davidson episode that I read Lange's *History of Materialism*, and was thereby fortified in my attitude toward philosophy. Lange's book was not only a notable history, fascinating and sympathetic, of the development of the materialist doctrine, but it culminated in the conclusion, for which I was now fully prepared, that metaphysics is a form of poetry. I might not indeed myself put it quite that way. I would draw a distinction between metaphysics and poetry. But I was willing to see the justification of a metaphysical system no longer placed on an abstract pseudo-scientific foundation but on a personal esthetic foundation. I was thus prepared to view later with sympathy and admiration the metaphysical view of the world as a beautiful spectacle put forward by Jules de Gaultier, one of the most notable thinkers of our time, though outside academic circles. So far as I received any stimulus from other thinkers in the foundation of my own philosophic vision, Hinton, Davidson, and Lange are the names I would mention. I had thus, by about the age of twenty-five, at almost the same moment abandoned the active search for a philosophy of my own and yet accepted the functional justification of philosophy on a new intellectual foundation.

While I thus reached the conviction that every man who thinks should have his own philosophy, I do not seem to have shown any anxiety to acquire a philosophy for myself. As I now, long afterwards, look back at this period of my life I am disposed to put this indifference down to a sound instinct. It has come to seem to me that one's philosophical attitude can only be reached by an unconscious process, that it is a spiritual growth as much beyond our control, and often beyond our consciousness, as physical growth.

Not in philosophy alone are the soundest results thus reached. We are probably here faced by a general law. I am interested to see that in the recently published volume of collected essays by the late A. R. Powys, an architect with a sound and penetrating insight into the art of architecture, precisely the same principle is enunciated as I find to hold true in philosophy. Discussing the "Origin of Bad Architecture," he regards dependence on the reasoned theories of others as the source of feeble architecture. We need, he declares, first of all a digested experience. "By 'digested experience' is meant the subconscious result of experience, or in other words the certain feeling and assured knowledge which are in a man without resort to conscious feeling or thought." It has come about, as it were, instinctively. This does not mean that the art product comes solely from within. Powys insisted, on the contrary, that the experience would come from without and include distinctive elements of the age in which the artist lives. But they are unconsciously absorbed and transformed; that is the significance of the term "digested experience." So far as I acquired any philosophy it was the outcome of varied contacts with the world during long years, unconsciously assimilated and transferred into an unrealized personal credo.

It was not until later life when I was contemplating the publication of my book, *The Dance of Life*, largely made up of essays written during the immediately preceding years, that I realized that I had, without directly aiming at it, attained a philosophic attitude and even what may fairly be described as a philosophic creed. I was now sixty years of age but, as I view this matter—though I know that few professional philosophers would agree—that is quite early enough in life for a definitely conscious philosophic credo to be established. Much earlier than this, of course, it must have been slowly constituted and actively operative, but the less consciously the more genuinely. Otherwise it runs the risk of being merely artificial, adopted on grounds that were not the real outcome of personality.

In the determination of my own philosophic outlook it seems evident that there was from the outset the instinctive impulse to embrace the elements of life harmoniously. When I discovered that there was a discordant break between the emotional religious life as I had been experiencing it, and my strong intellectual aptitudes, I was profoundly unhappy. Some of my friends, when they discovered a similar break in their psychic lives, had cheerfully selected the side of intellect and had nothing but contempt to pour on emotional religious demands, while in the mass of mankind, needless to say, neither intellectual nor emotional demands are strong enough to involve any conflict, and the result is an attitude of indifference rather than of serenity. It has been my experience that people of sensitive intelligence have often remarked on my "serenity." This is not the outcome of any conscious intention on my part and I have often enough been far from conscious of any inner serenity. But I can well believe that the conquest of opposing psychic elements into a single

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harmonious whole naturally results in an attitude of serenity.

During the Great War I came to realize that the harmony I had attained between the two opposing elements was really only a particular application of a deep-lying tendency of my nature. This came about through my contemplation of the disputes between militarists, whether German or English, over the term "conflict," which they confused with "war." I realized that while war was undoubtedly a form of conflict, we must regard conflict as a much wider term, including forms of opposition which were not war and might be of totally different tendency. That brought the disputes between nations into line with that general tendency to opposition which is essential to life and opened out the possibility of superseding war, not in a merely negative manner, but by the fruitful necessity of the presence of opposites. Conflict is in nature but it is a fruitful conflict in which each opposing element may have its essential value. I might have recalled the saying of Heraclitus that "Conflict is the father of all things," since conflict that was violent could hardly be fatherly. I set forth the result I had reached, together with some of its wider implications, in an essay, "The Philosophy of Conflict" (ultimately embodied in a volume with the same title), which I regard as of significance in the presentation of my philosophic outlook.

Those pacifists who supposed that the supersession of war by more civilized methods of adjusting national differences meant the abolition of conflict fell into an error which was fatal, it seemed to me, to a sound conception of life and the world.

Our planetary system, we are taught, must be viewed as carried on harmoniously by the action of opposing forces, centripetal and centrifugal, pulling in opposite ways. The

same conflict is even clearer in the vegetable world. We see it in every seed in its vital pressure against the enclosing capsule and every unfolding frond of fern bears witness to a similar opposition of forces. Opposition is not a hindrance to life, it is the necessary condition for the becoming of life. No doubt this realization of opposing forces in the vegetable world came to me as an early suggestion from Hinton's *Life in Nature*. Now I am ever increasingly impressed by the resemblances of vegetable life to animal life. I see how closely akin are the laws that rule in both spheres. I find that the behaviour of plants is what my own would be under the same conditions and with the same limitations. That the same law of conflicting forces as the necessary condition of life prevails in the animal world needs no proof, nor that it is most marked in the highest forms of life, and notably in the mammal with its expanding ovum which only develops under the pressure of the firmly constricting womb. I reach out toward a conception of the unity of what we call the universe. What we call life really prevails throughout.

It was not until later that I realized that the vision of harmonious conflict I had attained in an entirely different direction might be seen perfectly in that sphere of sex the study of which had been my chief life work. I made no clear statement of it until 1931. At that time, in the *Forum Philosophicum*, Professor Del-Negro put forth his view of the problem of sex as one of "antinomies" only to be resolved by compromise. Dr. Schmidt, the editor, invited me to write a reply (which was reprinted in the Second Series of my *Views and Reviews*). I was unable to accept Del-Negro's doctrine of compromise between essential elements of life. Here, as elsewhere, I saw the harmonious conflict of opposite tendencies, each necessary to the other and supporting it

while compromise would merely mean weakness. All the phenomena of sex seemed to illustrate this conflict, from the physical opposites of tumescence and detumescence to the erotic conflict of courtship and the social balance between sex indulgence and sex abstinence. Sex and culture are perfectly balanced. To desire freedom from this balance is to desire annihilation.

Man in his conscious arts illustrates this same conflict. Nowhere is it better revealed than in the primary art of architecture by the device of the arch. Here we see how in the conflict of two opposing forces each supports the other and stability is ensured. If the opposition ceased the arch would collapse in ruin.

In the other primordial art, more ancient even than architecture, that of dancing, we see the same harmonious conflict beautifully illustrated. Every pose of the dancer is the achievement of movement in which the maximum tension of opposing muscular actions is held in the most fluidly harmonious balance.

In other arts, even if this principle is less convincingly illustrated, it is still present. In poetry, there is the conflict between the centrifugal impulse of expression and the centripetal restraint of form. From an early period men drawn to poetry seem instinctively to have felt that the impulse to emotionalized expression should be held in check by an impulse to rigid form, and that only when these two opposites were combined could the result be accepted as satisfactory. When, as sometimes happens, a poet rebels against this need for the harmonious opposition and seeks either to concentrate on form or on expression there are but few who enjoy his results.

One could, I believe, detect a similar law in other arts.

## HAVELOCK ELLIS

The demand for the harmonious conflict of opposites rules in nature's operations, and since man is a part of nature it also rules in his operations. He disregards it at his peril and at the sacrifice of that serenity which comes of an even unconscious sense of oneness with our universe.

So much, it seems to me, may serve to indicate all that I have been able to achieve in the general attainment of a philosophic credo. Since, even to myself, it has only been a slow, gradual, and largely unconscious achievement I have naturally made little attempt to preach it to others. But it has been clear to any sympathetic reader of my books, and to some it has been helpful in aiding them to reach their own outlook in the world.

The reward of being simple and sincere with what seem the facts of one's universe is that one sheds abroad an influence that may be incalculable. It is worth while.





E. M. Forster

*E. M. Forster, since the death of D. H. Lawrence, would probably by many critics be ranked as the foremost living English novelist. He has attained his eminence by the production of few books and these have generally reached only a small audience. Mr. Forster is distinguished for the beauty and polish of his style, the subtlety of his understanding, and the rich humanity that underlies the apparently quiet surfaces of his novels.*

*Born in 1879, he was educated at Kings College, Cambridge. His publications include "Where Angels Fear to Tread" (1905); "The Longest Journey" (1907); "A Room With a View" (1908); "Howards End" (1910); "The Celestial Omnibus" (1923), "Alexandria: A History and a Guide" (1923); "Pharos and Pharillon" (1923); "A Passage to India," his most popular and probably his finest novel (1924); "Aspects of the Novel" (1927); "The Eternal Moment" (1928); "Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson" (1934); and a distinctive collection of essays, "Abinger Harvest" (1936).*

## E. M. Forster

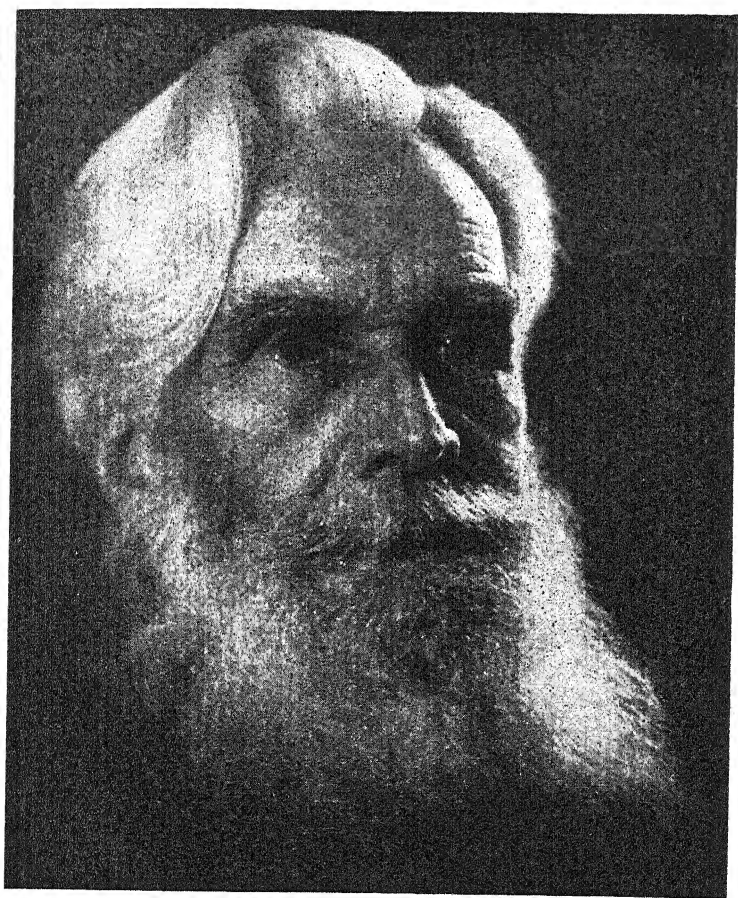
I DO NOT believe in belief. But this is an age of faith, where one is surrounded by so many militant creeds that, in self-defence, one has to formulate a creed of one's own. Tolerance, good temper, and sympathy are no longer enough in a world which is rent by religious and racial persecution, in a world where ignorance rules, and science, who ought to have ruled, plays the subservient pimp. Tolerance, good temper, and sympathy—well, they are what matter really, and if the human race is not to collapse they must come to the front before long. But for the moment they don't seem enough, their action is no stronger than a flower, battered beneath a military jack boot. They want stiffening, even if the process coarsens them. Faith, to my mind, is a stiffening process, a sort of mental starch, which ought to be applied as sparingly as possible. I dislike the stuff. I do not believe in it, for its own sake, at all. Herein I probably differ from most of the contributors to this volume, who believe in belief, and are only sorry they can't swallow even more than they do. My lawgivers are Erasmus and Montaigne, not Moses and St. Paul. My temple stands not upon Mount Moriah but in that Elysian Field where even the immoral are admitted. My motto is "Lord, I disbelieve—help thou my unbelief."

I have, however, to live in an Age of Faith—the sort of thing I used to hear praised and recommended when I was a boy. It is damned unpleasant, really. It is bloody in every sense of the word. And I have to keep my end up in it. Where do I start?

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With personal relationships. Here is something comparatively solid in a world full of violence and cruelty. Not absolutely solid, for psychology has split and shattered the idea of a "person," and has shown that there is something incalculable in each of us, which may at any moment rise to the surface and destroy our normal balance. We don't know what we're like. We can't know what other people are like. How then can we put any trust in personal relationships, or cling to them in the gathering political storm? In theory we can't. But in practice we can and do. Though A isn't unchangeably A or B unchangeably B, there can still be love and loyalty between the two. For the purpose of living one has to assume that the personality is solid, and the "self" is an entity, and to ignore all contrary evidence. And since to ignore evidence is one of the characteristics of faith, I certainly can proclaim that I believe in personal relationships.

Starting from them, I get a little order into the contemporary chaos. One must be fond of people and trust them if one isn't to make a mess of life, and it is therefore essential that they shouldn't let one down. They often do. The moral of which is that I must myself be as reliable as possible, and this I try to be. But reliability isn't a matter of contract—that is the main difference between the world of personal relationships and the world of business relationships. It is a matter for the heart, which signs no documents. In other words, reliability is impossible unless there is a natural warmth. Most men possess this warmth, though they often have bad luck and get chilled. Most of them, even when they are politicians, *want* to keep faith. And one can, at all events, show one's own little light here, one's own poor little trembling flame, with the knowledge that it's not the only light that is shining in the darkness, and not the only one which the darkness doesn't



HAVELOCK ELLIS

[*Studio Hugo*]



E. M. FORSTER

comprehend. Personal relations are despised to-day. They are regarded as bourgeois luxuries, as products of a time of fair weather which has now passed, and we are urged to get rid of them, and to dedicate ourselves to some movement or cause instead. I hate the idea of dying for a cause, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country. Such a choice may scandalize the modern reader, and he may stretch out his patriotic hand to the telephone at once, and ring up the police. It wouldn't have shocked Dante, though. Dante places Brutus and Cassius in the lowest circle of Hell because they had chosen to betray their friend Julius Caesar rather than their country Rome. Probably one won't be asked to make such an agonizing choice. Still there lies at the back of every creed something terrible and hard for which the worshipper may one day be required to suffer, and there is even a terror and a hardness in this creed of personal relationships, urbane and mild though it sounds. Love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of the state. When they do—down with the state, say I, which means that the state will down me.

This brings me along to democracy, "even Love, the Beloved Republic, which feeds upon Freedom and lives." Democracy isn't a beloved republic really, and never will be. But it is less hateful than other contemporary forms of government, and to that extent it deserves our support. It does start from the assumption that the individual is important, and that all types are needed to make a civilization. It doesn't divide its citizens into the bossers and the bossed, as an efficiency regime tends to do. The people I admire most are those who are sensitive and want to create something or discover something, and don't see life in terms of power, and such people

get more of a chance under a democracy than elsewhere. They found religions, great or small, or they produce literature and art, or they do disinterested scientific research, or they may be what is called "ordinary people," who are creative in their private lives, bring up their children decently, for instance, or help their neighbours. All these people need to express themselves; they can't do so unless society allows them liberty to do so, and the society which allows them most liberty is a democracy.

Democracy has another merit. It allows criticism, and if there isn't public criticism there are bound to be hushed-up scandals. That is why I believe in the press, despite all its lies and vulgarity, and why I believe in Parliament. The British Parliament is often sneered at because it's a talking shop. Well, I believe in it because it is a talking shop. I believe in the private member who makes himself a nuisance. He gets snubbed and is told that he is cranky or ill-informed, but he exposes abuses which would otherwise never have been mentioned, and very often an abuse gets put right just by being mentioned. Occasionally, too, in my country, a well-meaning public official loses his head in the cause of efficiency, and thinks himself God Almighty. Such officials are particularly frequent in the Home Office. Well, there will be questions about them in Parliament sooner or later, and then they'll have to mind their steps. Whether Parliament is either a representative body or an efficient one is very doubtful, but I value it because it criticizes and talks, and because its chatter gets widely reported.

So two cheers for democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough: there is no occasion to give three. Only Love, the Beloved Republic deserves that.



What about force, though? While we are trying to be sensitive and advanced and affectionate and tolerant, an unpleasant question pops up: Doesn't all society rest upon force? If a government can't count upon the police and the army, how can it hope to rule? And if an individual gets knocked on the head or sent to a labour camp, of what significance are his opinions?

This dilemma doesn't worry me as much as it does some. I realize that all society rests upon force. But all the great creative actions, all the decent human relations, occur during the intervals when force has not managed to come to the front. These intervals are what matter. I want them to be as frequent and as lengthy as possible and I call them "civilization." Some people idealize force and pull it into the foreground and worship it, instead of keeping it in the background as long as possible. I think they make a mistake, and I think that their opposites, the mystics, err even more when they declare that force doesn't exist. I believe that it does exist, and that one of our jobs is to prevent it from getting out of its box. It gets out sooner or later, and then it destroys us and all the lovely things which we have made. But it isn't out all the time, for the fortunate reason that the strong are so stupid. Consider their conduct for a moment in the Nibelung's *Ring*. The giants there have the guns, or in other words the gold; but they do nothing with it, they do not realize that they are all-powerful, with the result that the catastrophe is delayed and the castle of Walhalla, insecure but glorious, fronts the storms for generations. Fafnir, coiled around his hoard, grumbles and grunts; we can hear him under Europe to-day; the leaves of the wood already tremble, and the Bird calls its warnings uselessly. Fafnir will destroy us, but by a blessed dispensation he is stupid and slow, and creation goes on just

outside the poisonous blast of his breath. The Nietzschean would hurry the monster up, the mystic would say he didn't exist, but Wotan, wiser than either, hastens to create warriors before doom declares itself. The Valkyries are symbols not only of courage but of intelligence; they represent the human spirit snatching its opportunity while the going is good, and one of them even finds time to love. Brunhilde's last song hymns the recurrence of love, and since it is the privilege of art to exaggerate she goes even further, and proclaims the love which is eternally triumphant and feeds upon freedom, and lives.

So that is what I feel about force and violence. It is, alas! the ultimate reality, on this earth, but—hooray!—it doesn't always get to the front. Some people call its absences "decadence"; I call them "civilization" and find in such interludes the chief justification for the human experiment. I look the other way until fate strikes me. Whether this is due to courage or to cowardice in my own case I cannot be sure. But I know that if men hadn't looked the other way in the past nothing of any value would survive. The people I respect most behave as if they were immortal and as if society were eternal. Both assumptions are false: both of them must be accepted as true if we are to go on eating and working and loving, and are to keep open a few breathing holes for the human spirit. No millennium seems likely to descend upon humanity; no better and stronger League of Nations will be instituted; no form of Christianity and no alternative to Christianity will bring peace to the world or integrity to the individual; no "change of heart" will occur. And yet we needn't despair, indeed we cannot despair; the evidence of history shows us that men have always insisted on behaving creatively under the shadow of the sword; that they have done their artistic and scientific and domestic

stuff for the sake of doing it, and that we had better follow their example under the shadow of the airplanes. Others, with more vision or courage than myself, see the salvation of humanity ahead, and will dismiss my conception of civilization as paltry, a sort of tip-and-run game. Certainly it is presumptuous to say that we *can't* improve, and that man, who has only been in power for a few thousand years, will never learn to make use of his power. All I mean is that, if people continue to kill one another at the rate they do, the world cannot get better than it is, and that since there are more people than formerly, and their means for destroying one another more diabolic, the world may well get worse. What's good in people—and consequently in the world—is their insistence on creation, their belief in friendship, in loyalty, for its own sake; and though violence remains and is indeed the major partner in this muddled establishment, I believe that creativeness remains too, and will always assume direction when violence sleeps. So, though I am not an optimist, I cannot agree with Sophocles that it were better never to have been born. And although I see no evidence that each batch of births is superior to the last, I leave the field open for this happier view. This is such a difficult time to live in, especially for a European, one can't help getting gloomy and also a bit rattled.

There is of course hero worship, fervently recommended as a panacea in some quarters. But here we shall get no help. Hero worship is a dangerous vice, and one of the minor merits of a democracy is that it does not encourage it, or produce that unmanageable type of citizen known as the Great Man. It produces instead different kinds of small men, and that's a much finer achievement. But people who can't get interested in the variety of life and can't make up their own minds get dis-

contented over this, and they long for a hero to bow down before and to follow blindly. It's significant that a hero is an integral part of the authoritarian stock-in-trade to-day. An efficiency regime can't be run without a few heroes stuck about to carry off the dullness—much as plums have to be put into a bad pudding to make it palatable. One hero at the top and a smaller one each side of him is a favourite arrangement, and the timid and the bored are comforted by such a trinity, and, bowing down, feel exalted by it.

No; I distrust Great Men. They produce a desert of uniformity around them and often a pool of blood too, and I always feel a little man's pleasure when they come a cropper. Every now and then one reads in the newspapers some such statement as, "The *coup d'état* appears to have failed, and Admiral Boga's whereabouts is at present unknown." Admiral Boga had probably every qualification for being a great man—an iron will, personal magnetism, dash, flair—but fate was against him, so he retires to unknown whereabouts instead of parading history with his peers. He fails with a completeness that no artist and no lover can experience, because with them the process of creation is itself an achievement, whereas with him the only possible achievement is success. I believe in aristocracy though—if that's the right word, and if a democrat may use it. Not an aristocracy of power, based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate, and the plucky. Its members are to be found in all nations and classes, and all through the ages, and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos. Thousands of them perish in obscurity; a few are great names. They are sensitive for others as well as for themselves, they are considerate without being

fussy, their pluck is not swankiness but the power to endure, and they can take a joke. I give no examples—it is risky to do that—but the reader may as well consider whether this is the type of person he would like to meet and to be, and whether (going further with me) he would prefer that the type should *not* be an ascetic one. I'm against asceticism myself. I'm with the old Scotchman who wanted less chastity and more delicacy. I don't feel that my aristocrats are a real aristocracy if they thwart their bodies, since bodies are the instruments through which we register and enjoy the world. Still, I don't insist here. This isn't a major point. It's clearly possible to be sensitive, considerate, and plucky and yet be an ascetic too, and if anyone possesses the first three qualities, I'll let him in! On they go—an invincible army, yet not a victorious one. The aristocrats, the elect, the chosen, the best people—all the words that describe them are false, and all attempts to organize them fail. Again and again authority, seeing their value, has tried to net them and to utilize them as the Egyptian priesthood or the Christian Church or the Chinese civil service or the Group Movement, or some other worthy stunt. But they slip through the net and are gone; when the door is shut they are no longer in the room; their temple, as one of them remarked, is the holiness of the heart's imagination, and their kingdom, though they never possess it, is the wide open world.

With this type of person knocking about, and constantly crossing one's path if one has eyes to see or hands to feel, the experiment of earthly life cannot be dismissed as a failure. But it may well be hailed as a tragedy, the tragedy being that no device has been found by which these private decencies can be transferred to public affairs. As soon as people have power they go crooked and sometimes dotty, too, because the pos-

session of power lifts them into a region where normal honesty never pays. For instance, the man who is selling newspapers outside the Houses of Parliament can safely leave his papers to go for a drink, and his cap beside them: anyone who takes a paper is sure to drop a copper into the cap. But the men who are inside the Houses of Parliament—they can't trust one another like that; still less can the government they compose trust other governments. No caps upon the pavement here, but suspicion, treachery, and armaments. The more highly public life is organized the lower does its morality sink; the nations of to-day behave to each other worse than they ever did in the past, they cheat, rob, bully, and bluff, make war without notice, and kill as many women and children as possible; whereas primitive tribes were at all events restrained by taboos. It's a humiliating outlook—though the greater the darkness, the brighter shine the little lights, reassuring one another, signalling, "Well, at all events I'm still here. I don't like it very much, but how are you?" Unquenchable lights of my aristocracy! Signals of the invincible army! "Come along—anyway let's have a good time while we can." I think they signal that too.

The saviour of the future—if ever he comes—will not preach a new gospel. He will merely utilize my aristocracy; he will make effective the good will and the good temper which are already existing. In other words he will introduce a new technique. In economics, we are told that if there was a new technique of distribution, there need be no poverty, and people would not starve in one place while crops were dug under in another. A similar change is needed in the sphere of morals and politics. The desire for it is by no means new; it was expressed, for example, in theological terms by Jacopone da Todi over six hundred years ago. "*Ordina questo amore, O*

*tu che m'ami*," he said. "O thou who lovest me—set this love in order." His prayer was not granted and I do not myself believe that it ever will be, but here, and not through a change of heart, is our probable route. Not by becoming better, but by ordering and distributing his native goodness, will man shut up force into its box, and so gain time to explore the universe and to set his mark upon it worthily. At present he only explores it at odd moments, when force is looking the other way, and his divine creativeness appears as a trivial by-product to be scrapped as soon as the drums beat and the bombers hum.

Such a change, claim the orthodox, can only be made by Christianity, and will be made by it in God's good time: man always has failed and always will fail to organize his own goodness, and it is presumptuous of him to try. This claim—solemn as it is—leaves me cold. I cannot believe that Christianity will ever cope with the present world-wide mess, and I think that such influence as it retains in modern society is due to its financial backing rather than to its spiritual appeal. It was a spiritual force once, but the indwelling spirit will have to be restated if it is to calm the waters again, and probably restated in a non-Christian form. Naturally a great many people, and people who are not only good but able and intelligent, will disagree with me here; they will vehemently deny that Christianity has failed, or they will argue that its failure proceeds from the wickedness of men, and really proves its ultimate success. They have Faith, with a large F. My faith has a very small one, and I only bring it into the open because these are strenuous and serious days, and one likes to say what one thinks while speech is still free: it may not be free much longer.

These are the reflections of an individualist and a liberal who has found his liberalism crumbling beneath him and at first felt

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ashamed. Then, looking around, he decided there was no special reason for shame, since other people, whatever they felt, were equally insecure. And as for individualism—there seems no way out of this, even if one wants to find one. The dictator-hero can grind down his citizens till they are all alike, but he can't melt them into a single man. That is beyond his power. He can order them to merge, he can incite them to mass antics, but they are obliged to be born separately and to die separately and, owing to these unavoidable termini, will always be running off the totalitarian rails. The memory of birth and the expectation of death always lurk within the human being, making him separate from his fellows and consequently capable of intercourse with them. Naked I came into the world, naked I shall go out of it! And a very good thing too, for it reminds me that I am naked under my shirt. Until psychologists and biologists have done much more tinkering than seems likely, the individual remains firm and each of us must consent to be one, and to make the best of the difficult job.



J. B. S. Haldane

*Professor J. B. S. Haldane, son of the late Professor J. S. Haldane, is one of England's greatest living scientists and popularisers of science. But his activities are far from limited to the laboratory, and within recent years he has become famous for his socialist activities and for his exposition of Marxist theory and practice as seen by a scientist. This point of view he has made admirably clear in his recent book "Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences." An ardent supporter of the Spanish Republicans in the Civil War, in 1936 he visited Government Spain to give technical advice. Within recent years he has appeared more and more on the political platforms of the left.*

*Born in 1892, educated at Eton and Oxford, he served in France and Iraq from 1914 to 1919. A Fellow of New College, Oxford, from 1919 to 1922, he has since held positions as Reader in Biochemistry at Cambridge, Fullerian Professor of Physiology to the Royal Institution, and Professor of Genetics at London University. He is at present Professor of Biometry at University College, London. Among his most notable publications are "Possible Worlds" (1927), "Science and Ethics" (1928), "The Causes of Evolution" (1933), "Heredity and Politics" (1937), and "The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences" (1938), the last two published by George Allen & Unwin.*

## J. B. S. Haldane

**M**Y PHILOSOPHY is the philosophy of Marx and Engels, of Lenin and Stalin. It is a living philosophy all right. Millions of men and women live for it and, when the need arises, die for it. And on the intellectual level, too, it is alive and growing. Although it includes theory, it puts practice first; and one can only learn Marxism at all fully by acting as a Marxist, though conversely one cannot act as a Marxist without some knowledge of the theory.

Marxism is concerned with change. So an account of how I changed over to it is not out of place here. As a scientist I was concerned with matter. I even experimented on myself, and treated myself as a material system obeying physical and chemical laws. If these laws had not held for me as they do for chemicals in a bottle I should probably have killed myself. In fact, I was betting my life that materialism was true.

But I could not believe in materialism, because every account of that doctrine which I had read reduced me to a machine, or to something that merely behaved. Now I knew that I did more than behave. I felt and knew, I willed and planned. Then I read Engels' books, *Feuerbach* and *Anti-Dühring*, and found that there was a kind of materialism which bridged the gap between matter and mind, without denying the reality of either.

So far so good. But I found that when this dialectical materialism is applied to society it predicts that our existing economic system will cease to work; and that so far from the necessity for a thorough change being recognized by

the ruling class, such a change can only come about through a revolutionary struggle by the workers. I didn't like this theory. As a professor I was in a securer position than most people. I hoped that if necessary there could be a gradual change to socialism by the successive nationalization of railways, mines, land, banks, and so on. I wanted to get on with my job as a scientist, and to keep out of politics except for voting and occasionally speaking. I looked on at politics with interest and a mild contempt, as many professors still do.

And then Donald Duck stepped off the screen and hit me on the jaw. Hitler started dismissing my German colleagues because they happened to be Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Socialists, Liberals, or merely honest men. I had to find jobs for some of them. And the moment I started making anti-Hitler propaganda I found myself associated with all sorts of Reds, of whom the Marxists seemed to have the best grip of the situation.

I still said, "It can't happen here." But I noticed the amazingly rapid growth of corruption in England, which began to impede my scientific work. I also noticed that the British Government was systematically breaking treaties and other pledges such as the League Covenant in such a way as to help Hitler and Mussolini.

In December 1936 I went to Spain to give technical advice to the Loyalists. I found that as a result of British policy the British volunteers, armed with Canadian rifles dating from the nineteenth century, were facing up-to-date German tanks, that the rebel Spanish ports were becoming German naval bases, and that everything for which I had fought from 1914 to 1918, including the rights of small nations and the safety of the world for democracy, was being handed back to the German militarists. It didn't make sense.

But from the Marxist angle it does make sense. So I had to take the political and economic side of Marxism seriously, including the theory that the state is at the bottom a product of the class struggle, serving to keep one particular class on top. This explains why the British Empire will commit suicide, as it is now doing, rather than risk a change in its class structure. And in Spain and elsewhere I found that although men and women of many different political views were fighting for democracy, there was a hard core of Marxists, many of them communists, who were an example to the rest of us both in their understanding of the situation and in their capacity for self-sacrifice. So I became a Marxist both in theory and in practice. In the next few years millions of others will follow a similar path.

Here is the philosophy in tabloid. Reality is something that happens. Nothing just exists in its own right. There is nothing behind nature, though there is infinitely more in nature than we know at present. There is no supernatural, and nothing metaphysical. Our minds are real, but there was matter before there was mind. The sensations and thoughts in our minds mirror reality, though imperfectly. We are always getting nearer to absolute truth, but never get all the way.

Reality is full of contradictions. When we say the earth is at rest and that it is in motion, both statements are true in their different ways, and correspond to realities. Pitch is both a solid and a liquid. Man is both good and bad.

Change may be continuous or abrupt. When anything increases to a certain point there is sudden change. Water boils at 212° F. The last straw breaks the camel's back. Atoms only give out energy in quanta. Creative change always arises from struggle. Men don't become good by being kept in cotton wool, but by fighting difficulties and temptations. The

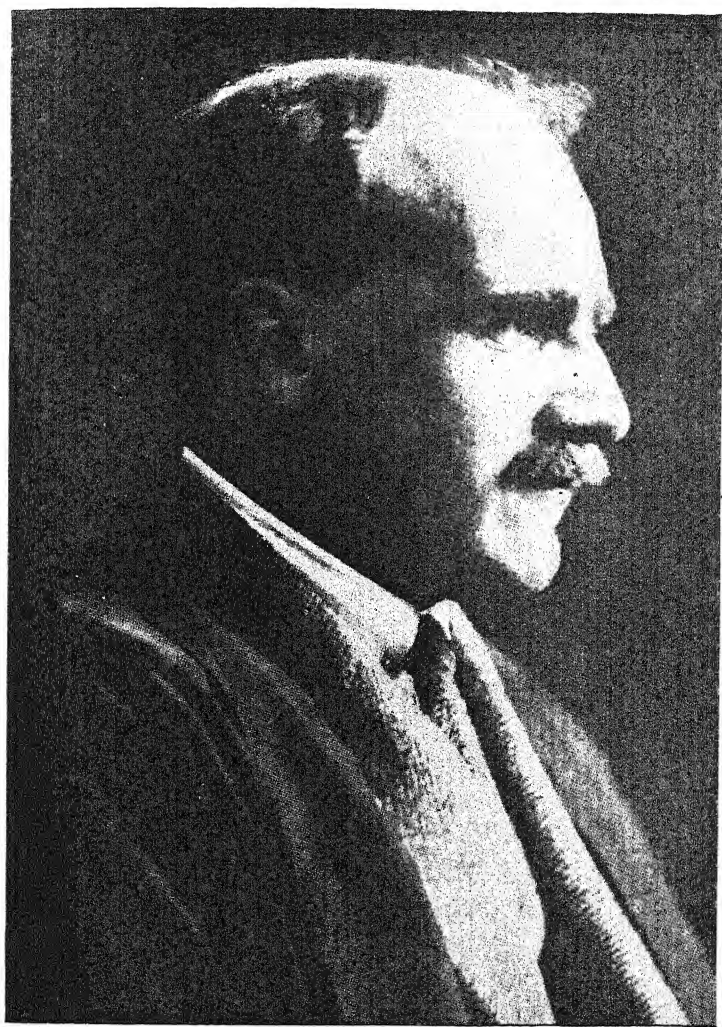
## I BELIEVE

most important conflicts and contradictions are internal, and the most important changes come from inside.

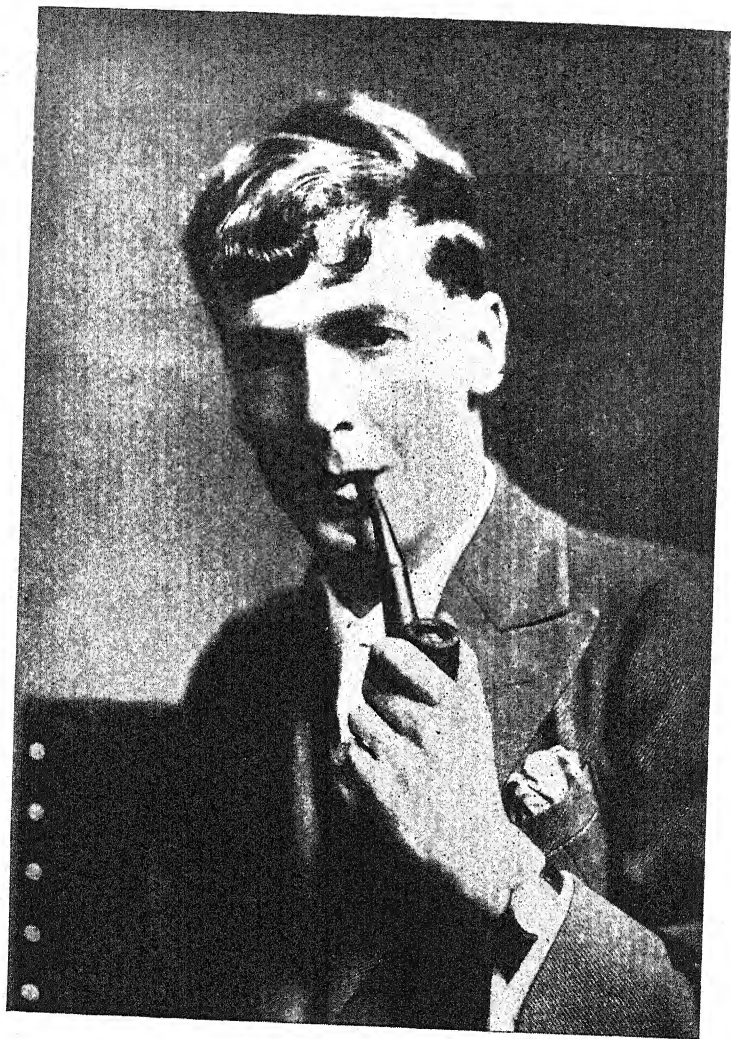
The most fundamental thing about a society is its method of production. Capitalism did not arise because capitalists stole the land or the workmen's tools, but because it was more efficient than feudalism. It will perish because it is not merely less efficient than socialism, but actually self-destructive. It is shaking itself to pieces at the present moment in a series of economic crises like the oscillations of a shaft that is whirling too fast.

Each economic system develops its own system of thought, law ethics, and politics. We can't think like medieval men to-day, even though we try to. Nevertheless, man is not the slave of economic or any other sort of fate. Freedom is the recognition of necessity. This is a paradox, but a truth. The man who realizes that there is bound to be an earthquake because his home town is on a fault clears out or gets himself a quakeproof home. The man who trusts to luck gets caught when the quake comes.

If enough people see that capitalism is cracking up, study the philosophy that predicted its doom, and act together, we can make the transition without too much trouble. If we think it is none of our business, and wait for the crash, we shall have to face one of two alternatives. The first is Fascism, leading to a series of international wars and a lowering of cultural and economic standards, ending, as I believe, in a final disaster. The other is a prolonged and bloody civil war, as in Russia. I am an optimist. I believe that there are peoples which will take the third path, the difficult path of reason. Such peoples will be able to carry what is best in their old culture into a new economic system. But they will only do so by clear thinking and brave action. And they will have to decide quickly.



J. B. S. HALDANE



LANCELOT HOGBEN



# Lancelot Hogben

*Lancelot Hogben bids fair to become the Thomas Henry Huxley of this generation. His researches in endocrinology and human genetics have won for him a high place in the technical scientific world. His reputation has of later years been enlarged by the publication of two monumental works of popular science: "Mathematics for the Million" and "Science for the Citizen," both of them published by George Allen & Unwin and extremely successful. His little book "The Retreat from Reason" is also worth any serious reader's perusal. Professor Hogben's contribution to this volume was solicited because he is among the most articulate and intelligent of those first-rate younger scientists who have recognised at last that a bridge must be constructed between the laboratory and the world of common men.*

*Lancelot Hogben was born in Southsea, England, in 1895, and educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. He has been in turn lecturer in zoology, Imperial College of Science; assistant director of the Animal-Breeding Research Department; lecturer in experimental physiology at Edinburgh; assistant professor of zoology at McGill University; professor of zoology at the University of Cape Town; professor of social biology in the University of London. At present he is Regius Professor of natural history at the University of Aberdeen. He has been married for twenty years to Dr. Enid Charles, the well-known authority on population statistics, and has four children. In 1936 he became a Fellow of the Royal Society. In addition to his two well-known popular works, his publications include many books and monographs in the fields of mathematical genetics, endocrinology, general physiology, and biology.*

# Lancelot Hogben

## I

**I**F I HAD been asked to give a label to my creed, when I was starting in my profession as a scientific worker, I should have called it Socialism. That was twenty-five years ago. To-day I prefer to call it scientific humanism. Scientific humanism is the creed I profess and the profession I try to practise. This does not mean that the socialist creed of my adolescence was contrary to the scientific outlook, or that I have renounced it. I still believe that no system in which credit and industry are privately owned can take the fullest advantage of new scientific knowledge for the satisfaction of common needs.

What it does mean is that when I was younger my political left hand did not bother about what my professional right hand was doing. I did not yet realize how the pursuit of science is bound up with the responsibilities of citizenship in a society which has been transformed by scientific knowledge. When I began to do so, I saw that Socialism can mean two different ways of using scientific discoveries.

In pre-1914 days few except Socialists clearly recognized that cyclical depression is an inherent characteristic of competitive industry conducted for private gain. During the period which elapsed between the end of the Great War and the beginning of the great depression most of the older generation of political leaders still believed that capitalism has a self-regulating capacity for promoting progress in

knowledge and general well-being, except in so far as it is embarrassed by wars and strikes. Meanwhile, a new generation had grown accustomed to State control over war industries and large relief schemes for a permanent army of unemployed. In these circumstances all that the Socialists had preached seemed to be vindicated by events. The last generation which believed in *laissez-faire* was passing away, and the success of Socialism seemed to be assured.

In Germany and Britain nothing of the sort happened. From the moment when all hope of return to pre-war conditions was officially abandoned by Conservative politicians the official Socialist parties entered an eclipse which has lasted ever since. How it so happened is a question which admits of many answers. One is that the only things about which all Socialists could agree were now generally accepted. To all but themselves the new situation exposed differences which cut across the sectarian strategies of Social Democrat and Communist or of Stalinist and Trotskyist. While *laissez-faire* was in the ascendant Socialism meant having some plan in contradistinction to having *none*. The collapse of Liberalism meant that Socialism could no longer survive by asserting the need for planning in the abstract. What Socialists had long forgotten was now clear to their competitors. From its inception there had been two sorts of Socialism, each with a plan of its own.

One Socialism starts where orthodox free trade leaves off. It embraces or assumes the Liberal doctrine that prosperity is measured by the number and variety of saleable commodities which the consumer is "free" to purchase. Its chief quarrel with Liberalism is that inequalities of spending power and recurrent unemployment restrict the choice of a large section of the population. To remedy this it proposes to redistribute

spending power more equitably by fixing prices, by restricting income to services (past, present, or future) and by statutory limitation of working hours adjusted under public ownership. In short it does not criticize the way in which capitalist society uses scientific knowledge. It is primarily a protest against how it distributes its products, and the change at which it aims is primarily a change in the *administrative* machinery of industry. Its success does not entail any radical change in the creative policy of industry. Under a Socialist regime conceived in such terms industry will continue to produce much the same things as before. As a corollary, the intellectual leadership of Socialism will be recruited from lawyers and journalists. The realization of Socialism so defined therefore demands no far-reaching educational reforms.

The other Socialism, that of Robert Owen, of Charles Kingsley, of Edward Carpenter, and of William Morris, began as a protest against the dreary squalor which was effacing the common wealth of the countryside during the earlier stages of steam-power production. It denounced the worldly wisdom which chose an ever-increasing multiplicity of gewgaws and passive distractions as the goal of co-operative endeavour. In opposition to the Liberal doctrine that prosperity is being able to choose the greatest variety of goods, it asserted the need to decide whether the dark satanic mills were making things which are good for men to choose. There was at first no clear recognition that science could create the prospect of a new heaven for uncongested traffic and a new earth for spacious living.

The Utopians—as they are usually called—anticipated scientific humanism because they saw clearly that human needs cannot be assessed in terms of “consumers’ choice” and because they saw the hypertrophied metropolitanism of

capitalist evolution creating psychological strains for which redistribution of spending power furnishes no sufficient remedy. Throughout the period which begins with the inspired prose of Owen and ends with the uninspired verse of Morris, steam was still the only source of power for factory production, electrolytic processes of chemical manufacture were in their infancy, and motor transport was unknown. Inescapably a higher level of productivity had been achieved at the price of urban congestion, and no radical departure from the fundamental plan of capitalism could be accomplished without lowering the available potential of leisure and creature comforts. So the term Utopian became a term of abuse. Socialists wise in the wisdom of the world as it then was made it their chief business to convince the clerk that the municipal milkman will wake him as punctually as the boy from the shop at the end of the street, or that a nationally owned railway service will get him to the office as early as the company which now owns the trains.

To-day scientific knowledge offers us the possibility of a new plan of social living more akin to the Utopia of a William Morris or an Edward Carpenter. Mobile power, aviation, and electrical communications make it possible to distribute population at a high level of productive capacity without the disabilities of cultural isolation. A high potential of leisure and creature comforts no longer demands the beehive pattern of social living. Co-operative organization in the age of hydro-electric power, of light metals, of artificial fertilizers, and of applied genetics offer us new instruments of manufacture, new means of transport, and new means of communications, both to restore the serenity of small community life and to promote a lively sympathy with folk in other lands. Broadcasting has now brought the cultural

benefits of travel to the bedside, and scientific horticulture offers us a programme of bio-esthetic planning which may prove more congenial to basic human needs than the spectacle of a sixpenny store building.

The straphanging multitudes of our great cities need circuses as well as bread. It is no longer Utopian to ask what sort of circus human nature demands. The Third Reich has given its own answer. The answer is Jew-baiting, war, and neo-pagan weddings. The revolt against the beehive city of competitive industrialism has already become a retreat into barbarism. The retreat will continue unless science can foster a lively recognition of the positive achievements of civilization by reinstating faith in a future of constructive effort. It will not be arrested by old-school-tie Socialists fresh from the exploits of the Oxford Union or by a radical intelligentsia whose social culture is a judicious blending of flexions and genuflexions.

Seventy years ago it was still possible to discuss whether poverty is morally tolerable or materially inevitable. It was still possible to discuss whether war is spiritually edifying or socially escapable. All this is changed. Poverty in the sense in which it was then defined, the sense in which the word is intelligible to the social biologist, is not materially inevitable. The only obstacle to removing it is lack of social initiative. War is not a moral picnic. It threatens to destroy the entire fabric of our civilization if we do not eradicate it with as much promptitude and ruthlessness as we have eradicated or are eradicating smallpox, malaria, and yellow fever.

## II

Thus the civilized world of to-day vacillates between deep disillusionments and great expectations of imminent

possibilities. Mass unemployment has destroyed confidence in progress and prosperity through private enterprise, while abundant imitations of available plenty dazzle us with new potentials of social achievement made possible by advancing scientific knowledge. In the day-to-day drama of politics partisans of the progressive movements are preoccupied with eleemosynary makeshifts and have done little to show how public enterprise can take creative initiative from production for private gain. So it is becoming daily obvious that education for political leadership in democratic countries was not devised to take advantage of our new opportunities, and it is becoming equally obvious that the machinery of democratic government was not devised to exploit expert knowledge for general well-being.

Advancing scientific knowledge has swept away many beliefs which sustained popular aspirations in the formative stages of modern democracy. The providential dispensation which endorsed the same plan of governance for Church and State, the mythology of the Beautiful Savage, and metaphysical libertarianism with its hypertrophied insistence on diversity of personal preference do not belong to the century in which we are living. In their place modern science now offers us a *New Social Contract*. The social contract of scientific humanism is the recognition that the sufficient basis for rational co-operation between citizens is scientific investigation of the common needs of mankind, a scientific inventory of resources available for satisfying them, and a realistic survey of how modern social institutions contribute to or militate against the use of such resources for the satisfaction of fundamental human needs.

Power to shape the future course of events so as to extend benefits of advancing scientific knowledge for the satisfaction



of common human needs must be guided by an understanding of the impact of science on human society. So the New Social Contract demands a new orientation of educational values and new qualifications for civic responsibilities. While others call for change in the methods of education and rightly demand removal of restrictions to educational opportunities, scientific humanism also asserts the need for a far-reaching reformation in the content of education to endow the pursuit of knowledge with a new sense of social reformation so conceived as an indispensable prerequisite to genuine social advance.

Herein lies an essential difference between the standpoint of scientific humanism and current views of political partisans who aspire to a progressive outlook. People who call themselves progressives generally adopt one of two attitudes to education. In so far as Liberals and moderate Socialists deign to trouble themselves about educational issues their concern is to utilize a more ample reservoir of talent in the service of the community. Socialists of the extreme Left are chiefly concerned with propagating a creed which is partly based on the teaching of the Prussian mystic Hegel and partly on a shrewd analysis of the impact of early nineteenth-century technology on mid-nineteenth-century social institutions. In practice such differences are trivial, because so many people now believe that a war against the dictator countries is inevitable. Education is therefore an effeminate topic.

For several reasons I cannot share this conviction. There are three possibilities ahead of us. The first a series of world wars, resulting in the complete destruction of civilization as depicted in Cicely Hamilton's novel, *Lest Ye Die*. The second is that world war will stop before civilization is completely destroyed. The third is that hell will not be let loose, because the warlike temper of the dictator countries

will exhaust itself or because an effective policy of constructive pacification will mature in the so-called democratic countries. If the first, or most likely, happens no social effort is worth while. So the rational alternative to suicide for parents is to take a chance on the second or third.

Either way it is important to base social action on correct views about how new scientific knowledge affects the potential of social change. I believe that this must force us to conclusions which are not palatable to die-hard progressives of the nineteenth century. I believe also that the eclipse of the progressive outlook is specially due to wrong views about the impact of new scientific knowledge on contemporary social change. To illustrate this I shall cite two examples. One is the fact that many progressives believed in the immediate collapse of Hitler's power, when he announced the policy of autarchy. The other is that most Socialists believe that the relative increase of the employed section of the community is necessarily propitious to their aims.

The belief that increasing scientific knowledge makes for closer economic interdependence, and, what was often stated as a corollary to this, the belief that this interdependence provides a guarantee of world peace, were dogmas almost universally held by progressive thinkers in the nineteenth century. This was not unnatural in the first flush of surprise which followed the introduction of steam navigation, trans-continental railways, and oceanic telegraphy. Our own perspective should be different. We need only recall that Chile saltpetre can now be made anywhere, that hospitals are using radioactive sodium prepared from ordinary salt instead of having to import the rare radioactive minerals, that the Channel Islands are no longer regarded as a sufficient guarantee of the genetic credentials of cattle, that we may soon be

making most of our machinery of aluminium from the clay of our soils and magnesium from sea salt, that we are already beginning to feed our pigs on the disintegration products of wood pulp, to grow several crops of tomatoes a year by tank gardening, and to produce sugar by the agency of bacteria from vegetable waste matter.

Without committing ourselves to any dogmatic assertions about how far this will go on, what we can at least say is this. The effect of scientific discovery during the past two centuries has been mainly to increase the potential of local self-sufficiency consistent with the satisfaction of fundamental human needs. One result is that we can now entertain the possibility of a less centralized, and therefore less bureaucratic and less congested, type of world organization as a goal for rationally guided effort. The warmongers of Central Europe and elsewhere know too well that free trade is no longer part of the ideological temper of the age in which we live, and that the appeal for national self-sufficiency canalizes discontent with the dreary futilities of planless mechanization in congested modern communities. It is therefore a tragic fact that those who have the will to peace too often resist propaganda for promoting a greater measure of local self-sufficiency with arguments which antedate the synthetic manufacture of nitrate fertilizers.

Of itself the appeal for local self-sufficiency is neither good nor bad. In Fascist States social policy is dominated by the death wish, and self-sufficiency is advocated as a means of war-making without regard for the social welfare of the citizen. Where social policy becomes alert to the new powers and inventions available for human well-being, the satisfaction of basic human needs will take precedence over the multiplication of useless commodities to distract neurotic urban

populations, and the merits of more or less industrial specialization will be examined with proper regard to the distribution of population in congenial and healthy surroundings. Because the doctrine of free trade was sustained by the moral conviction that the greatest good of the greatest number is the same as the greatest number of goods available, to the greatest number of people, its apostles accepted the urban squalor of a coal economy as the inevitable price for their own definition of prosperity. For privacy and serenity of life, the satisfactions of parenthood and the graces of human fellowship in modest communities they offered mankind the compensation of the department store and labour-saving flats in flowerless streets. Fascism is the reaction of outraged human nature endowed with enough intelligence to be exasperated, and too demoralized to explore an alternative constructive use for the new powers at hand.

One feature of the impact of new technical resources during the first phase of steam-power production was a steady reduction in the demand for skilled handicraftsmen. This encouraged Socialists to believe that society was splitting up into a small parasitic class of owners and an ever-growing, increasingly militant class of employees with common political aspirations. A skyscraper of social tact was built on this foundation of *a priori* psychology which was in essence legalistic like the political theories of the orthodox parties. The implicit assumption is that the physical character of a man's work, the surroundings in which it is carried out, monotony, initiative, solitude, propinquity to home environment, accessibility to outdoor exercise are all negligible in their effect upon his political affiliations in comparison with the legal contract regulating his employment. This is bad human biology. The reaction of a human being to the contents

of books or to the sound of the human voice is affected by his work in many ways. It depends among other things upon whether he is physically weary or merely bored, upon whether he does work that is fatiguing or work that is monotonous. Consequently we should not expect that a miner will necessarily react to the same type of political propaganda in the same way as the clerk in a department store.

Even before the introduction of electricity as a source of power, the conduct of a mechanized and more highly urbanized society had initiated changes which counteracted the cultural process of levelling down. Universal schooling, a popular Press, free libraries succeeded one another in countries with a democratic constitution. With the coming of electricity as a source of power industry came under the impact of new problems of costing and new technical advantages of mobility. Where it has been introduced into the factory, it has created a new demand for a new type of skill and special training, while dispensing with a large volume of unskilled and casual labour which can be done by machinery. To see the impact of the new technical forces most clearly we need to examine the statistics of a country which is in a more advanced state of technical development than Britain. In his recent book, *Insurgent America*, Alfred Bingham's analysis of the growth of social classes during recent years shows that the new type of skilled administrative employee has steadily increased in proportion to labourers performing heavy unskilled work in the United States.

Thus modern technology has brought into being a social group with social aspirations and a social status of its own. Its social aspirations for further opportunity of employment can be realized only by the further extension of technical improvements which have encouraged its growth. For the

## I BELIEVE

time being at least, it is still growing and at present, politically inarticulate. It may therefore play a decisive role in the success of any social movement which can claim its allegiance. In a period of social crisis its importance should not be judged by its numerical strength, because its personnel commands resources against which mere man power is helpless and barricades are literary illusions. If it can be enlisted in a task which will offer far greater opportunities of creative service than it now enjoys, the transition from a discredited and demoralized competitive, to a rationally planned industrial, system is assured. If it is driven by hysterical fear to support any dictator movement which offers the prospect of a breathing space, it may become the instrument for destroying democracy and freedom of discourse.

## III

Freedom of discourse is a necessary pre-condition of Socialism *en rapport* with scientific humanism. Parliamentary democracy as it now exists is not. Whatever happens, democracy in its present form will not survive. It is dying of its own inherent dilatoriness in a world which demands decisive courses and prompt decisions. The social economy of which it was an instrument is in process of rapid dissolution; and must inescapably make way for an economy of abundance or for a more rigid caste system within the framework of a semi-collectivist organization for the prosecution of wars which will eventually destroy civilization. The immediate problems of Socialism conceived in terms of the abundance which science has made available are therefore twofold. We must take immediate steps to lay the foundations of world

government by federating nations whose will to peace and prosperity is greater than their aspirations to national sovereignty or empire. We must also develop new organs of local government to enlist expert knowledge for the satisfaction of common human needs.

With its lop-sided insistence on individual preference and its obsessional loyalty to the ideology of the city states of Mediterranean civilization liberal democracy is not equipped to discharge this function. Enlisting expert knowledge for the service of our common humanity presupposes more extensive initiative for a civil service with knowledge of the new potential of human welfare, vigilant supervision by representatives with an educational equipment which few if any contemporary politicians possess, a greater measure of *ad hoc* selection to clarify the decisions which the electorate is called on to make, and the acceptance of the new social contract which scientific humanism demands. Such acceptance is compatible with party freedom for discussion beyond a certain level. It is *not* compatible with the preservation of class privilege without regard to general social well-being.

The defence of parliamentary democracy in its present form is the negation of Socialism and a tactic which invited certain defeat. The enthusiasm with which Communists of the *Front Populaire* lately espoused its cause while they still declined to repudiate a creed of insurrectionary violence is therefore a sinister feature of the collapsing morale of the civilization in which we live. Partisans of privilege needs must lie. Their common humanity would paralyse their will to obstruct social progress if they relinquished the luxury of mendacity. Men and women who wish to play their part in progress to a Socialist order of society have no need to lie. Truth is their most powerful weapon, and the habit of telling

the truth is an essential of a Socialist morality consonant with the social contract of scientific humanism.

Of the new social order which may emerge if truth prevails no one has written with more eloquent lucidity than my friend J. D. Bernal, himself a Marxist. With these words he brings to an end his invaluable book *The Social Function of Science*:

Already we have in the practice of science the prototype for all human common action. The task which the scientists have undertaken—the understanding and control of nature and of man himself—is merely the conscious expression of the task of human society. The methods by which this task is attempted, however imperfectly they are realized, are the methods by which humanity is most likely to secure its own future. In its endeavour, science is communism. In science men have learned consciously to subordinate themselves to a common purpose without losing the individuality of their achievements. Each one knows that his work depends on that of his predecessors and colleagues, and that it can only reach its fruition through the work of his successors. In science men collaborate not because they are forced to by superior authority or because they blindly follow some chosen leader, but because they realize that only in this willing collaboration can each man find his goal. Not orders, but advice, determines action. Each man knows that only by advice, honestly and disinterestedly given, can his work succeed, because such advice expresses as near as may be the inexorable logic of the material world, stubborn fact. Facts cannot be forced to our desires, and freedom comes by admitting this necessity and not by pretending to ignore it. These are things that have been learned painfully and incompletely in the pursuit of science. Only in the wider tasks of humanity will their full use be found.



# Julian Huxley

*Julian Huxley, brother of Aldous Huxley, grandson of Thomas Henry Huxley, has added lustre to a distinguished name. Like Lancelot Hogben, he represents the forward-looking viewpoint of the younger British scientists. Like him, also, he is eminent both as a research scientist and as a brilliant popularizer. He commands an expository style of superb ease, clarity, and dignity. The general reader may be particularly directed to Mr. Huxley's "Essays of a Biologist" and to the fascinating and monumental "Science of Life," written in collaboration with H. G. Wells and G. P. Wells. The influence of his writings has been enlarged through his many radio talks, lectures, etc.*

*Julian Huxley was born in 1887 and educated at Eton and Oxford. He has taught in Oxford University; the Rice Institute at Houston, Texas; King's College, London; and in the Royal Institution, where he held the chair of Fullerian Professor of Physiology. He was biological editor of the Encyclopædia Britannica, 14th edition, and since 1935 has been Secretary of the Zoological Society of London.*

*Some of his major publications, in addition to those noted above, include "The Stream of Life" (1926); "Animal Biology," with J. B. S. Haldane (1927); "Africa View" (1931); "Problems of (1934); "We Europeans," with A. C. Haddon (1935); "Evolution: The Modern Synthesis" (1940). The last-named is published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd.*

# Julian Huxley

I BELIEVE THAT LIFE can be worth living. I believe this in spite of pain, squalor, cruelty, unhappiness, and death. I do not believe that it is necessarily worth living, but only that for most people it can be.

I also believe that man, as individual, as group, and collectively as mankind, can achieve a satisfying purpose in existence. I believe this in spite of frustration, aimlessness, frivolity, boredom, sloth, and failure. Again I do not believe that a purpose inevitably inheres in the universe or in our existence, or that mankind is bound to achieve a satisfying purpose, but only that such a purpose can be found.

I believe that there exists a scale or hierarchy of values, ranging from simple physical comforts up to the highest satisfactions of love, esthetic enjoyment, intellect, creative achievement, virtue. I do not believe that these are absolute, or transcendental in the sense of being vouchsafed by some external power or divinity: they are the product of human nature interacting with the outer world. Nor do I suppose that we can grade every valuable experience into an accepted order, any more than I can say whether a beetle is a higher organism than a cuttlefish or a herring. But just as it can unhesitatingly be stated that there are general grades of biological organization, and that a beetle is a higher organism than a sponge, or a human being than a frog, so I can assert, with the general consensus of civilized human beings, that there is a higher value in Dante's *Divine Comedy* than in a popular hymn, in the scientific activity of Newton or Darwin

than in solving a crossword puzzle, in the fullness of love than in sexual gratification, in selfless than in purely self-regarding activities—although each and all can have their value of a sort.

I do not believe that there is any absolute of truth, beauty, morality, or virtue, whether emanating from an external power or imposed by an internal standard. But this does not drive me to the curious conclusion, fashionable in certain quarters, that truth and beauty and goodness do not exist, or that there is no force or value in them.

I believe that there are a number of questions that it is no use our asking, because they can never be answered. Nothing but waste, worry, or unhappiness is caused by trying to solve insoluble problems. Yet some people seem determined to try. I recall the story of the philosopher and the theologian. The two were engaged in disputation and the theologian used the old quip about a philosopher resembling a blind man, in a dark room, looking for a black cat—which wasn't there. "That may be," said the philosopher: "but a theologian would have found it."

Even in matters of science, we must learn to ask the right questions. It seemed an obvious question to ask how animals inherit the result of their parents' experience, and enormous amounts of time and energy have been spent on trying to give an answer to it. It is, however, no good asking the question, for the simple reason that no such inheritance of acquired characters exists. The chemists of the eighteenth century, because they asked themselves the question, "What substance is involved in the process of burning?" became involved in the mazes of the phlogiston theory; they had to ask, "What sort of process is burning?" before they could see that it did not involve a special substance, but was merely a particular case of chemical combination.

When we come to what are usually referred to as fundamentals, the difficulty of not asking the wrong kind of question is much increased. Among most African tribes, if a person dies, the only question asked is, "Who caused his death, and by what form of magic?" The idea of death from natural causes is unknown. Indeed, the life of the less civilized half of mankind is largely based on trying to find an answer to a wrong question, "What magical forces or powers are responsible for good or bad fortune, and how can they be circumvented or propitiated?"

I do not believe in the existence of a god or gods. The conception of divinity seems to me, though built up out of a number of real elements of experience, to be a false one, based on the quite unjustifiable postulate that there must be some more or less personal power in control of the world. We are confronted with forces beyond our control, with incomprehensible disasters, with death; and also with ecstasy, with a mystical sense of union with something greater than our ordinary selves, with sudden conversion to a new way of life, with the burden of guilt and sin and of ways in which these burdens may be lifted. In theistic religions, all these elements of actual experience have been woven into a unified body of belief and practice, in relation to the fundamental postulate of the existence of a god or gods.

I believe this fundamental postulate to be nothing more than the result of asking a wrong question, "Who or what rules the universe?" So far as we can see, it rules itself, and indeed the whole analogy with a country and its ruler is false. Even if a god does exist behind or above the universe as we experience it, we can have no knowledge of such a power: the actual gods of historical religions are only the personifications of impersonal facts of nature and of facts of our inner

mental life. Though we can answer the question, "What are the Gods of actual religions?" we can only do so by dissecting them into their components and showing their divinity to be a figment of human imagination, emotion, and rationalization. The question, "What is the nature of God?" we cannot answer, since we have no means of knowing whether such a being exists or not.

Similarly with immortality. With our present faculties, we have no means of giving a categorical answer to the question whether we survive death, much less the question of what any such life after death will be like. That being so, it is a waste of time and energy to devote ourselves to the problem of achieving salvation in the life to come. However, just as the idea of God is built out of bricks of real experience, so too is the idea of salvation. If we translate salvation into terms of this world, we find that it means achieving harmony between different parts of our nature, including its subconscious depths and its rarely touched heights, and also achieving some satisfactory relation of adjustment between ourselves and the outer world, including not only the world of nature, but the social world of man. I believe it to be possible to "achieve salvation" in this sense, and right to aim at doing so, just as I believe it possible and valuable to achieve a sense of union with something bigger than our ordinary selves, even if that something be not a god but an extension of our narrow core to include in a single grasp ranges of outer experience and inner nature on which we do not ordinarily draw.

But if God and immortality be repudiated, what is left? That is the question usually thrown at the atheist's head. The orthodox believer likes to think that nothing is left. That, however, is because he has only been accustomed to think in terms of his orthodoxy.

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In point of fact, a great deal is left.

That is immediately obvious from the fact that many men and women have led active, or self-sacrificing, or noble, or devoted lives without any belief in God or immortality. Buddhism in its uncorrupted form has no such belief, nor had the great nineteenth-century agnostics, nor have the orthodox Russian Communists, nor had the Stoics. Of course, the unbelievers have often been guilty of selfish or wicked actions; but so have the believers. And in any case that is not the fundamental point. The point is that without these beliefs men and women may yet possess the mainspring of full and purposive living, and just as strong a sense that existence can be worth while as is possible to the most devout believers.

I would say that this is much more readily possible to-day than in any previous age. The reason lies in the advances of science.

No longer are we forced to accept the external catastrophes and miseries of existence as inevitable or mysterious; no longer are we obliged to live in a world without history, where change is only meaningless. Our ancestors saw an epidemic as an act of divine punishment: to us it is a challenge to be overcome, since we know its causes and that it could be controlled or prevented. The understanding of infectious disease is entirely due to scientific advance. So, to take a very recent happening, is our understanding of the basis of nutrition, which holds out new possibilities of health and energy to the human race. So is our understanding of earthquakes and storms: if we cannot control them, we at least do not have to fear them as evidence of God's anger.

Some, at least, of our internal miseries can be lightened in the same way. Through knowledge derived from psychology, children can be prevented from growing up with

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an abnormal sense of guilt, and so making life a burden both to themselves and to those with whom they come into contact. We are beginning to understand the psychological roots of irrational fear and irrational cruelty: some day we shall be able to make the world a brighter place by preventing their appearance.

The ancients had no history worth mentioning. Human existence in the present was regarded as a degradation from that of the original Golden Age. Down even to the nineteenth century, what was known of human history was regarded by the nations of the West as an essentially meaningless series of episodes sandwiched into the brief space between the Creation and the Fall, a few thousand years ago, and the Second Coming and the Last Judgment, which might be on us at any moment, and in any case could not be pushed back for more than a few thousand years into the future. In this perspective, a millennium was almost an eternity. With such an outlook, no wonder life seemed, to the great mass of humanity, "nasty, brutish and short," its miseries and shortcomings merely bewildering unless illuminated by the illusory light of religion.

To-day, human history merges back into prehistory, and prehistory again into biological evolution. Our time-scale is profoundly altered. A thousand years is a short time for prehistory, which thinks in terms of hundreds of thousands of years, and an insignificant time for evolution, which deals in ten-million-year periods. The future is extended equally with the past: if it took over a thousand million years for primeval life to generate man, man and his descendants have at least an equal allowance of time before them.

Most important of all, the new history has a basis of hope. Biological evolution has been appallingly slow and appallingly



wasteful. It has been cruel, it has generated the parasites and the pests as well as the more agreeable types. It has led life up innumerable blind alleys. But in spite of this, it has achieved progress. In a few lines, whose number has steadily diminished with time, it has avoided the cul-de-sac of mere specialization and arrived at a new level of organization, more harmonious and more efficient, from which it could again launch out toward greater control, greater knowledge, and greater independence. Progress is, if you will, all-round specialization. Finally, but one line was left which was able to achieve further progress: all the others had led up blind alleys. This was the line leading to the evolution of the human brain.

This at one bound altered the perspective of evolution. Experience could now be handed down from generation to generation; deliberate purpose could be substituted for the blind sifting of selection; change could be speeded up ten-thousandfold. In man evolution could become conscious. Admittedly it is far from conscious yet, but the possibility is there, and it has at least been consciously envisaged.

Seen in this perspective, human history represents but the tiniest portion of the time man has before him; it is only the first ignorant and clumsy gropings of the new type, born heir to so much biological history. Attempts at a general philosophy of history are seen in all their futility—as if someone whose acquaintance with man as a species were limited to a baby one year old should attempt a general account of the human mind and soul. The constant setbacks, the lack of improvement in certain respects for over two thousand years, are seen to be phenomena as natural as the tumbles of a child learning to walk, or the deflection of a sensitive boy's attention by the need of making a living.

The broad facts remain. Life had progressed, even before

man was first evolved. Life progressed further by evolving man. Man has progressed during the half million or so years from the first Hominidae, even during the ten thousand years since the final amelioration of climate after the Ice Age. And the potentialities of progress which are revealed, once his eyes have been opened to the evolutionary vista, are unlimited.

At last we have an optimistic, instead of a pessimistic, theory of this world and our life upon it. Admittedly the optimism cannot be facile, and must be tempered with reflection on the length of time involved, on the hard work that will be necessary, on the inevitable residuum of accident and unhappiness that will remain. Perhaps we had better call it a melioristic rather than an optimistic view: but at least it preaches hope and inspires to action.

I believe very definitely that it is among human personalities that there exist the highest and most valuable achievements of the universe—or at least the highest and most valuable achievements of which we have or, apparently, can have knowledge. That means that I believe that the State exists for the development of individual lives, not individuals for the development of the State.

But I also believe that the individual is not an isolated, separate thing. An individual is a transformer of matter and experience: it is a system of relations between its own basis and the universe, including other individuals. An individual may believe that he should devote himself entirely to a cause, even sacrifice himself to it—his country, truth, art, love. It is in the devotion or the sacrifice that he becomes most himself, it is because of the devotion or sacrifice of individuals that causes become of value. But of course the individual must in many ways subordinate himself to the community—

only not to the extent of believing that in the community resides any virtue higher than that of the individuals which compose it.

The community provides the machinery for the existence and development of individuals. There are those who deny the importance of social machinery, who assert that the only important thing is a change of heart, and that the right machinery is merely a natural consequence of the right inner attitude. This appears to me mere solipsism. Different kinds of social machinery predispose to different inner attitudes. The most admirable machinery is useless if the inner life is unchanged: but social machinery *can* affect the fullness and quality of life. Social machinery can be devised to make war more difficult, to promote health, to add interest to life. Let us not despise machinery in our zeal for fullness of life, any more than we should dream that machinery can ever automatically grind out perfection of living.

I believe in diversity. Every biologist knows that human beings differ in their hereditary outfits, and therefore in the possibilities that they can realize. Psychology is showing us how different are the types that jostle each other on the world's streets. No amount of persuasion or education can make the extravert really understand the introvert, the verbalist understand the lover of handicraft, the non-mathematical or non-musical person understand the passion of the mathematician or the musician. We can try to forbid certain attitudes of mind. We could theoretically breed out much of human variety. But this would be a sacrifice. Diversity is not only the salt of life, but the basis of collective achievement. And the complement of diversity is tolerance and understanding. This does not mean rating all values alike. We must protect society against criminals: we must struggle against

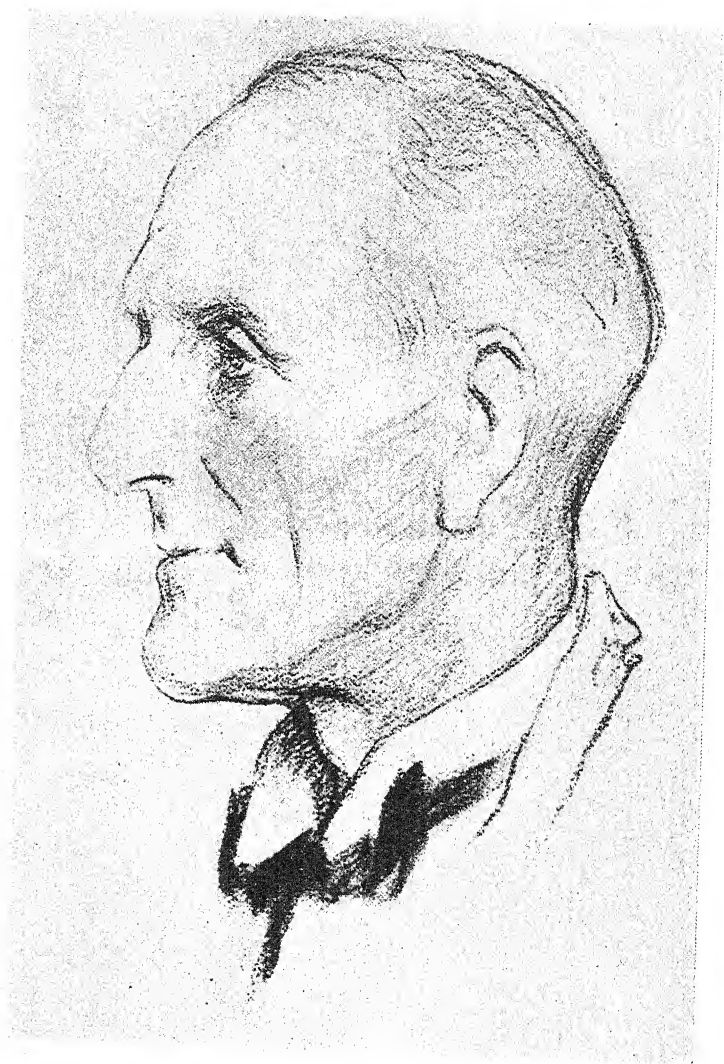
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what we think wrong. But just as in our handling of the criminal we should try to reform rather than merely to punish, so we must try to understand why we judge others' actions as wrong, which implies trying to understand the workings of our own minds, and discounting our own prejudices.

Finally, I believe that we can never reduce our principles to any few simple terms. Existence is always too various and too complicated. We must supplement principles with faith. And the only faith that is both concrete and comprehensive is in life, its abundance and its progress. My final belief is in life.



JULIAN HUXLEY



SIR ARTHUR KEITH

# Sir Arthur Keith

*Sir Arthur Keith is world famous for his researches in the antiquity of man. Born in 1866, he was educated at the Universities of Aberdeen, London, and Leipzig. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1913, and from 1912 to 1914 was President of the Royal Anthropological Society. From 1917 to 1923 he was Fullerian Professor of Physiology to the Royal Institution, and in 1927 was President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. From 1930 to 1933 he was Rector of the University of Aberdeen.*

*Amongst his many publications are the following: "Introduction to the Study of Anthropoid Apes" (1876), "Human Embryology and Morphology" (1901), "The Human Body" (1912), "The Antiquity of Man" (2nd edition, 1925), "Religion of a Darwinist" (1925).*



# Sir Arthur Keith

**D**EEP IN MY HEART I find a strange reluctance to set down here my innermost beliefs concerning God, man, and the universe. My birth in Scotland and my Presbyterian upbringing may be to blame. The fact that I have passed the sixty-third milestone in life and have acquired some degree of worldly wisdom may also have something to do with it. The real explanation, however, lies deeper: it is fear—or cowardice, if you will.

By nature I am one of the common herd. I fear ostracism. And I court it—perhaps deserve it—when I break the seal of my inner sanctuary and expose the beliefs which rule my conduct and dominate my outlook. Such an act is both sacrilegious and dangerous, for these innermost beliefs of ours are charged with the fierce fire of feeling and of passion. They have become parts of ourselves; we cannot discuss them openly and candidly without committing an assault on men and women whose love and comradeship we desire to retain. Hence most of us choose to be silent; wrangling is painful and the paths of peace are pleasant.

But in these pages I have thrown prudence to the winds. I am resolved to be absolutely and resolutely honest with myself and with my readers. I know I shall shock many, but I hope my confession may bring comfort to others.

I am not alone. At this moment there are some 1,750 millions of us making the journey of life. There are millions who, like myself, have set out with a heritage of goodly beliefs, but, by reason of what we have seen, heard, felt, thought, and

learned, have shed them one by one. With me there has been no sudden revolution, no dramatic revelation such as befell Saul of Tarsus; it simply dawned on me, as one day's experience followed another, that I was walking less and less by faith and more and more by reason.

No two human beings have been made, or ever will make, exactly the same journey in life. The same events may occur, but their sequence and combination cannot be the same. Every human life is a unique adventure. And if our stock of beliefs depends on the early pilgrimage we make, then there must be in existence to-day just as many shades of belief as there are human beings.

As long as man remains an inquiring animal, there can never be a complete unanimity in our fundamental beliefs. The more diverse our paths, the greater is likely to be the divergence in our beliefs. Most men and women have to take the way in life which happens to be open to them. They have neither the leisure nor the inclination to mark and digest the experiences which come their way. Only a few are free to select their paths and choose those which yield the richest harvests of experience.

The Church attracts inquiring youthful minds; it offers them, or seems to offer, the most likely road to a knowledge of ultimate realities. The priest may glean the best that has been revealed or thought concerning the ways of God to man. In his flock he can study the ways of man to God and assure himself that in the hearts of all men there is an insatiable craving for a settled and abiding creed.

The attractions of the church are of old standing, but those of science are recent. The number of young people who are devoting their lives to the increase of knowledge grows at an astonishing pace. The boundaries of time and space become

ever wider as these scientific travellers go farther afield in search of knowledge. We cannot neglect the harvests such searchers bring home. For can they study the works of creation without formulating schemes to explain what they have seen and measured? Without doubt the men who have chosen these novel paths in life have suffered the greatest mental change. They can no longer cling to the orthodox conceptions concerning the governance of the world of matter and of mind.

This is particularly true of men like myself who have spent their days in the study of living matter—especially if that matter has a human shape. My own path in life has given me opportunities which fall to few; it has taken me where I could examine at first hand all important discoveries concerning the pre-history of mankind. It has permitted me to study the most and best that is known of the living human body and brain. My sole right to take part in this series of living philosophies rests on the special experience which my life's work has brought me.

Presently I shall unburden my heart to my readers, but before I begin I should like to lay before them still another explanatory matter. I have said that of the thousands of millions born into the world, no two make identical journeys in life. It is also a fact that no two human beings have ever set out with identical equipment in mind and body. Every face is stamped with individuality when it issues from the womb. Every baby brings into the world a pattern on its finger-tips never seen before.

What is true of its fingers and its face is also true of its brain, but variety in this organ has an infinitely greater significance. Within the brain there are some 18,000 millions of microscopic living units or nerve cells. These units are grouped in myriads of battalions, and the battalions are linked together

by a system of communication which in complexity has no parallel in any telephone network devised by man. Of the millions of nerve units in the brain not one is isolated. All are connected and take part in handling the ceaseless streams of messages which flow into the brain from eyes, ears, fingers, feet, limbs, and body.

This mighty but silent traffic begins at birth and never ceases until death. The stream of traffic which is received and elaborated by our brains constitutes our experience, and out of this experience we earthly wayfarers build up our beliefs concerning the past, present, and future.

I have laid before the reader the conception which most inquiring biologists have arrived at concerning the structure of the brain and the nature of mind and thought. Such a conception bears in upon and alters the foundations of their creeds. Certainly the years of labour I have given to the human body and brain have compelled me to abandon many beliefs which are still widely held by the orthodox.

But it was not to explain my heterodoxy that I introduced at this point a brief dissertation on the complexity of the human brain. I mentioned these physiological considerations as a plea for tolerance. If nature cannot reproduce the same simple pattern in any two fingers, how much more impossible is it for her to reproduce the same pattern in any two brains, the organization of which is so inconceivably complex! Every child is born with a certain balance of faculties, aptitudes, inclinations, and instinctive leanings. In no two is the balance alike, and each different brain has to deal with a different tide of experience. I marvel, then, not that one man should disagree with another concerning the ultimate realities of life, but that so many, in spite of the diversity of their inborn natures, should reach so large a measure of agreement.

Having made these preliminary explanations, I have cleared the way for my confession. I shall state, as concisely as I can, the beliefs which I now hold, tracing the circumstances which led me to accept them.

My parents were religious in thought and deed. I was brought up on the Bible. Twice every Sunday the sounds of a "Free Church" bell came across a rural valley to our home in Aberdeenshire, and summoned all of us to service. We listened to a clergyman who was sincere, fervid, and learned. He preached the doctrine of salvation through Christ; if we believed in Him, and accepted unreservedly the revelation of the New Testament, then our safety in the next world was assured.

At that time I had no doubt that the existence of a "next world" was a well-ascertained fact. The dead whom I saw conveyed to the quiet of the churchyard were, I was convinced, really on their way to appear before the Great Judge for sentence. Heaven was in the glory of the clouds, and Hell lay within the flaming brimstone bowels of the earth. Both were geographical realities. I earnestly desired to gain the one and avoid the other.

I was told it was easy: I had only to believe. Even then I stumbled as I pressed forward. I frequented evangelical meetings, hoping to catch the ecstasy of faith which suffused the lives of those who had "found Christ." Try as I would, I could not convince myself that mere belief in the divinity of one who died on the cross so long ago, and in a country so remote from Scotland, could save me from the bottomless pit. Such a way of salvation seemed too easy to be true.

In my youth I had no doubts about the Old Testament; for

me it was literally true from end to end. It was an authentic history of the world: God created the earth, Adam was the first man, and Eve the first woman. I cannot remember ever questioning the justice of the sentence passed on Adam for eating the forbidden apple.

There were certain Biblical terms I found difficult to picture mentally. "Sin" was one—particularly "original sin," "Spirit" was another; when I read that "God is a spirit, infinite and eternal," no visual image materialized in my mind. But when I read of God the Creator, God the Father, the God of Abraham, the God who spoke face to face with Moses on Mount Sinai, then the result was different. Such a God I could picture, although I fashioned Him, I fear, too much on human lines.

His existence, power and righteousness I accepted as truths beyond question. The third person of the Trinity—the Holy Ghost—I never could encompass. Even now, when I hear those two words drop from the lips of a clergyman, I try in vain to grasp the image he has in mind.

Such were the bare and crude elements of my creed when I became a student of medicine in the University of Aberdeen. I entered on my studies at a time when Darwinism was capturing the professoriate of Britain. New vistas were opening up; a new history of the earth was being written.

I became enthralled in the study of anatomy and have remained a student of the human body ever since. For it seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that if man's destiny can be deciphered at all, it will only be deciphered by those who can read the hieroglyphics imprinted on the human body and mind. It soon became apparent to me that I had to give up my beloved Old Testament as a reliable guide to the origin and

nature of man. So we younger men abandoned the Bible as a textbook of science.

In the eighties of the last century geologists were unloading in the markets of science harvests of evidence gathered from the rocks. As the evidence accumulated, the evolutionary origin of all living things became a certainty. Then as now, zoologists were searching for the *way* of evolution—the manner in which transformation is effected in plants and animals; and although there is much concerning the machinery of evolution which remains unknown, yet as early as the end of the nineteenth century zoologists had agreed definitely on one thing: creation did not happen as pictured in the Bible. The Creator did not stand outside of living things and mould them once and for all. Indeed, creation did not work from without but from within. Creative power began to be thought of as inherent in all living matter.

Like other conservative-minded men, I tried to empty the new knowledge of science into the time-revered Biblical bottles. I know that many have succeeded, and still succeed, in doing so; but to my eye, the Biblical bottles, when modified to hold the wine of modern science, bear no resemblance to the Scriptural originals. To say that they are the same is to prostitute truth.

Yet, between the men who made the old Scriptural bottles and we who make the new there is one thing in common. The wise men of the ancient East felt, just as the men of science now feel, that a rational explanation must be sought and found for the beginning of things; for the heart of man has always craved an explanation of ultimate realities. The Biblical writers were familiar with only one kind of creative power—that manifested by human beings. Therefore, in seeking to explain how life and man came into the world, they con-

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ceived a Super-being endowed with human attributes. This Creative Power or God, they believed, worked on matter much as a potter works on clay—that is, he worked from without.

As I have indicated, the modern man of science is also looking for an explanation, but he finds the creative force pervading all matter, living and dead. It is as extensive as space and time. New worlds are coming into existence; others are dying. The machinery of the universe is automatic; the forces which control its movements are inherent in the constitution of matter. To discover how matter became thus endowed is beyond the scientist's reach, but he must take facts as he finds them. It is enough for him to know that the earth, life, and man are still in the throes of creation.

Certainly the creative power which is at work bears no resemblance to the personal God postulated by the Hebrews, and the modern man of science cannot fit Him into the scheme of the world as he knows it. He has to try to reconceive God, and when he has done so, nothing but an unsatisfying abstraction is left. It is unsatisfying because even the greatest men of science, although they may possess the intellects of giants, have still the hearts of children. And children cling to that which is endowed with a human shape and has been given the warmth of living flesh.

By the absorption of this new knowledge my youthful creed was smashed to atoms. My personal God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, melted away. The desire to pray—not the need—was lost, for one cannot pray for help to an abstraction. And prayer becomes an impossibility for those who are convinced that the natural course of events cannot be altered by calling upon a supermundane power to interfere. I became convinced that the course of human history is determined, not



by what happens in the skies, but by what takes place in the hearts of men.

These changes in my beliefs passed silently. I pursued my medical studies, and while still young went to reside in Siam. I went with the pride of the West in my heart and confident of my white superiority. I was thrown into intimate contact with the villages of a remote, jungle-covered province. They were followers of Buddha. In Scotland I had been taught that if we had been deprived of the Bible, we would have remained pure savages. In Siam I found myself among peasants who had never heard of Christ, and yet they were more law-abiding than we were in Europe. They led unselfish, considerate, charitable, and happy lives.

I left Siam with my creed still more tattered and torn. I had become less certain than ever that the truth as revealed and taught in Palestine was really the only truth. Apparently there had been other revelations in other lands, since there were clearly other ways of virtuous living besides the Christian way.

I envy those men and women who know how to keep their creeds intact and unchanged throughout the entire journey of life. Their path is peace and their hope is sure. There are millions, however, who cannot rest until they can make their creed fit the facts of life, or the facts of life fit their creed. I am such a one.

Among my later experiences are those which came to me through my interest in explorations revealing the earlier histories of Egypt, Babylonia, and Palestine. For example, on the site of Palestine, archaeologists are exposing the foundations of cities which were laid many centuries before Joshua led the Israelites into the promised land. In the hills of Judæa,

and particularly in those on the western shore of Lake Galilee, caves are being explored. They are found to be rich in the records of pre-history, carrying our knowledge of man in Palestine back to an antiquity of at least twenty thousand years. We know from a study of their fossil remains that the men who then lived on the shores of Galilee were quite unlike any now living: they were more primitive in form and more apelike in features.

Now, such tidings from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Palestine cannot flow in upon us and leave our regard for the Bible untouched. In the light of this knowledge the Bible appears as a patchwork made by many hands and at many dates. Men were inspired in ancient Palestine; but was the inspiration in any way different from that which now moves our great reformers? When Jeremiah prefaced his message to the Israelites with "Thus saith the Lord," he spoke according to the psychological beliefs of his time; had he known more of the human brain and how thoughts arise within it, he would have used more guarded language.

Thus my belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible became undermined. It remained for me a book of books, still divine—but divine in the sense that all great books are divine which teach men how to live righteously.

At every available opportunity I have pursued another inquiry which has left its mark on my creed. It is one thing to read of the discoveries of fossil man; it is quite another to handle and examine the fossil bones, the skulls, the casts of their brains, to compare them, to realize their place in time and in their evolutionary sequence. When we add to such evidence the many and striking approaches which great apes make to man in structure, and the parallel courses pursued by ape and

man during their development, the Darwinian conception of man's origin becomes, to men situated as I am, no longer a theory but an actuality.

We have to face the fact that we are the descendants of apelike ancestors. The truth, at first sight, is often ugly and repulsive to our personal feelings, but when it is the truth, its ultimate effects on us are always salutary. The sooner men realize their humble origin, the better it will be for their happiness. Perhaps they will then understand the true nature of those faults of the flesh known to good churchmen as "original sin."

The faithful priest accounts for man's inborn tendency to sin by tracing his descent from Adam. The modern biologist regards "original sin" as man's inheritance from the jungle. It must not be thought that evolution has diminished man's inheritance of animal propensities; on the contrary, it has strengthened the evidence. But at the same time evolution proves that there has mercifully taken place a great expansion in those regions of the brain which give man control of himself and the power to choose. The fight between good and evil, which is waged daily in the breast of every man, woman, and child, is the struggle for mastery between the old inheritance and the new.

Of all my studies, that which has touched my creed most closely has been my search into the nature of man's mental life. Beyond a doubt our thoughts, feelings, longings, aspirations, and passions are manifestations of the brain. When it is narcotized, destroyed, or dead, consciousness disappears. Man's brain does not stand as a thing apart; it is the culmination of an ascending series. There is no part of it and no function manifested by it that cannot be traced to humble beginnings lower in the animal scale. And what we postulate

for man's brain we must in all justice apply to that of the ape, the dog, and all other beasts.

Now, when physiologists study the living brain of an ape, they have no grounds for supposing that they are dealing with a dual structure. The brain is not a tenement inhabited by a spirit or soul. The "spirit" or "soul" is but a name for the manifestations of the living brain. The leading neurologists of the world are agreed that the same is true of the human brain. It was only when they abandoned the dual conception—an inheritance from the dark ages of medicine—that they began to understand the disorders of man's mind and how to treat them.

Modern medicine thus strikes at the very root of Christian doctrine. For if man is truly mortal, if death ends all, if the human soul is but the manifestation of the living brain, as light and heat are the manifestations of a glowing bar of steel, then there can be no resurrection of the dead. Man has the seeds of immortality in him, but the gift is for the race, not for the individual.

Thus the orthodox creed of my youth has been shattered by the impact of modern science. And since no man can live on a creed of pure negation, one may ask if it is possible to build a satisfactory way of life out of the wreckage. In all humility I believe a way is possible. That which at first seemed a curse has turned out to be a blessing. For if men believe, as I do, that this present earth is the only heaven, they will strive all the more to make heaven of it. To feel that we are mere birds of passage, only temporary probationers, is not conducive to the best conduct.

Once we have accepted our humble origin and the heritage it has brought us, we are prepared to discipline ourselves and

to behave with tolerance, sympathy, and charity to all others. We have to be resolutely self-reliant, not casting on the cross burdens which we ourselves ought to bear.

The natural span of man's existence contains enough to make this life a prize worth living. I have within me—as have all living beings—a greed of life, an urgent craving for immortality. That longing, which lies at the very root of the Christian religion, I look upon as a sin of the flesh—one to be conquered and suppressed. It is a vice akin to avarice. With its suppression comes a peace which only those who have felt it can realize.

A way of life is possible for man under the new dispensation of knowledge—but what of the ultimate meaning of life? How has life been called into existence? Why has it culminated in a human form? For what final purpose have we been called into existence? Surely man is part of a great whole!

The human brain is a poor instrument to solve such ultimate problems. We have to recognize its limitations. Yet it perceives how well-ordered all things are and how wonderful are the inventions of nature. Design is manifest everywhere. Whether we are laymen or scientists, we must postulate a Lord of the Universe—give Him what shape we will. But it is certain that the anthropomorphic God of the Hebrews cannot meet our modern needs.

I cannot help feeling that the darkness in which the final secret of the universe lies hid is part of the Great Design. This world of ours has been constructed like a superbly written novel: we pursue the tale with avidity, hoping to discover the plot. The elusiveness of the chase heightens our ardour, until the search becomes part of our religion. For the secret of secrets recedes as we run. The ultimate reason for man's

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existence is the only fruit in the garden of life which he can never hope to pluck.

Clearly, then, my creed is imperfect. It is not final. No creed is final. Such a creed as mine must grow and change as knowledge grows and changes.

## POSTSCRIPT

"SUCH a creed as mine must grow and change as knowledge grows and changes." Some time has passed since those words were written. Now I am in my seventy-third year. What has happened to my creed in the interval? Knowledge has certainly grown apace, but something else has also grown: the interval has brought experience—bodily suffering and death to my most loved. In the shaping of our inner beliefs what we are made to suffer and to endure counts more than all we may glean in the realms of science.

When I wrote last I was still in the full tide of my life's work, helping in every way open to me, both by encouraging the young and by personal endeavours to further our knowledge of the human body, particularly that kind of knowledge which paves the way for the advance of surgery. I was then living in London—a city which gives to the individual thinker a greater measure of freedom than any other in all the world. For it is only in great cities we can be intellectually and socially free; in lesser and more compact communities we are fettered by local opinion. So intently are neighbouring eyes focused on us that only the stout and resolute dare think aloud. And I, as already confessed, am one of the herd; I am never really at peace with myself unless I am in agreement with those around me.

And now I am—and have been these past five years—a

member of a village community in the green and wooded chalk uplands of the County of Kent, situated under the shadow of London. Here has been a separate, self-contained community these thousand years past, but now the tentacles of suburban London threaten us. Ours is a famous village, the village of Downe, the home of Darwin. Indeed I have but to rise from my chair and look from my study window and there just before me, half hid by its screen of trees, is Darwin's house. Thanks to my good friend Sir Buckston Browne, it is open to all who may care to visit it. Just beyond the orchard which surrounds me lives a company of young surgeons engaged on research. I have a laboratory still at my disposal. My young friend Mr. Theodore D. McCown of the University of California and I have just brought to an end a long research on fossil human bones. They were dug out of the caves of Mount Carmel, Palestine, and reveal a people who lived there at least one hundred thousand years before the time of Elijah. They were very different from any people now alive on the earth. My readers will thus realize that although I am now "retired" and a member of a village community, I am still in touch with the outer world.

How has my creed fitted into its new surroundings? Quite comfortably, so far as I am concerned. Allowances are made for me. The vicar of the parish, a man of my own age, is my nearest neighbour. We are on good terms, notwithstanding his persistent assertion that all I have thought and written concerning the evolution of man is "pure supposition." I like our village church with its squat square tower built from flints, dug from the chalk. I should miss the peal of its bells and so I subscribe to the fund that keeps them ringing as well as to that which keeps the parson preaching. Church and chapel decorate our village. Life to be enjoyed has to be

decorated. Bare subsistence is not enough. You may call me pagan, agnostic, atheist, or what you will, but I should be distressed to think that, were I to return a thousand years hence, I should find churches and churchmen had been swept from the face of Kent.

This attitude of mine toward the church and to all organized forms of religion is a bone of contention between me and many of my fellow rationalists of England. Many of them are militant. "Is it not the duty of everyone," they demand, "to fight for the truth and to destroy error—in season and out of season?" On such occasions I am pacifist. I hold that truth has to make its way in its own right without browbeating. A forced truth, like a forced peace, has no enduring value.

Another bone of contention with my fellow rationalists has been an unhappy phrase which crept into my creed as I have already stated it. "Whether we are laymen or scientists," I wrote, "we must postulate a *Lord of the Universe*—give him what shape we will." I felt then, as I do now, that "Lord" is a dangerous word—too apt to assume a human shape, and this shape it did assume in the minds of my critics. My fellow contributors are happier in their choice; they speak of an "immortal essence," "a pervading spiritual force," "a principal of guiding good," "a Great First Cause."

My difficulty is that which the late Lord Russell had to face when he sought to teach his younger brother Bertrand the elements of Euclid. Lord Russell maintained that his pupil had to accept certain axioms before they could begin their study. Bertrand refused; so no beginning could be made. We who seek to explain the evolution of the universe and all that is therein, living and dead, must postulate certain conditions as axiomatic. We must postulate a universe already in existence—permeated and controlled by certain qualities and



forces which were capable of evolving and changing until the universe assumed the state and form in which we now find it. How and why the universe came into existence is beyond our present reach. It is childish to say it is the work of a potter who stood outside his clay. We have to postulate a "Lord" that is inside the clay—just as life is an inherent quality of living matter. The poet may be justified in speaking of the universe as God's visible garment, but such a God or Creator is one to which science applies an altogether different nomenclature. Nevertheless my choice of the word "Lord" was an unhappy one.

Of the men and women who have contributed to these pages, none regard the Creator—God, the One, omnipotent and personal—as having the form and properties set forth in the book of Genesis. If they postulate a God at all, they give Him the pervading, inherent universal nature I have indicated above. Yet I am far from claiming that the anthropomorphic God is dead; the most we can say is that he is dying. We humans are weak-kneed beings. Most of us still demand a God, cast in our own mould—one who can give succour when approached in prayer. An emotional need has called Him into being.

Since first I set my beliefs on paper I have been in trouble with fellow rationalists over another matter. In the exuberance of youth I believed that reason, and reason alone, should determine our beliefs and our conduct. Some forty years ago I began to investigate the conditions and forces which had raised man to his unique position. I was then driven to the conclusion that among the chief determining factors of his rise were his inborn instincts and predispositions, particularly that which has come to be known as the "herd instinct." Closely allied to that instinct are the feelings which lead us

to love our own land and our own people. I do not see, as the world now is, how man can throw away these crutches; without them he would have been still in the jungle. Hence I pleaded that a prejudice—such as patriotism—should be given a recognized place in modern civilization. But I never said—nor thought—that prejudice should dominate reason. Our instincts, our feelings, our passions, and prejudices should serve us but not master us.

Some of my fellow rationalists are—or claim to be—determinists. If by determinism is meant that we have no power to do this rather than that—that man has no power to choose—then I am not a determinist. For every day—almost every hour—alternative modes of action arise; after due consideration, I take the one way rather than the other. The choice is often ethical in its nature—as to whether I should satisfy self or sacrifice self. It is sophistry to say my choice was already determined. Determinism is a criminal doctrine.

One point more and I have finished. Among those who have contributed to these pages, as among mankind in general, some are militant and impatient, eager to impose their beliefs on all; others are calm, patient, and gentle, willing to let what they regard as truth make its way into men's minds by virtue of its own merit. I hope to be given a place in the tolerant group.

Harold J. Laski

*Harold Laski is generally ranked as one of the outstanding political thinkers, educators, and debaters of the English-speaking world. He has influenced a whole generation of students on both sides of the Atlantic. His career represents a successful merger of writing, teaching, and practical public service.*

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*Some of his major publications: "The Problem of Sovereignty" (1917); "Authority in the Modern State" (1919); "Political Thought from Locke to Bentham" (1920); "Foundations of Sovereignty" (1921); "A Grammar of Politics" (1925); "Liberty in the Modern State" (1930); "An Introduction to Politics" (1931); "Democracy in Crisis" (1933); "The State in Theory and Practice" (1935); "The Rise of European Liberalism" (1936); "The Danger of Being a Gentleman" (1939); "The American Presidency" (1940). All but the first three published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd.*

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I HAVE, I suppose, been a socialist in some degree ever since the last years of my schooldays. When I try to think out the sources of a faith that has been the central conviction of my life, I find that the difficulties of sorting them out are immense. Something was due to the influence of a great schoolmaster who made us feel the sickness of an acquisitive society. Something, too, was the outcome of a Jewish upbringing, the sense it conferred of being treated differently from other people and for no obviously assignable cause. I learned a good deal from books, especially from those of Sidney and Beatrice Webb. They made me realize that a whole class of human beings was overlooked in the traditional liberalism of the family to which I belonged. And there stays in my mind a speech I heard in Manchester as a boy on the threshold of a university career from Keir Hardie, whose account of the effort of the Scottish miners to form a trade-union made me begin, at least dimly, to understand the price the workers have to pay for the social reform they achieve.

I went up to Oxford with radical views, and my years there confirmed me in them. It was the first experience I had of the intensity of class division in England. It was the first experience I had, also, of the resistance atmosphere can impose upon the admission of new ideas, which are dismissed less because they have been examined than because their premises are outside the environment they seek to penetrate. My debt to Oxford is immeasurable. Contact there with the late Professor Dicey, with Mr. Herbert Fisher and Professor Ernest Barker, was, on

the purely academic plane, a superb experience. But they were all, if I may so phrase it, aloof from life. Oxford generally, so far as its teachers were concerned, thought about social problems in a way which suggested interest in them but not responsibility for their solution. It told you, as it were, that correct analysis was important. It did not suggest that, when the analysis was made, any obligation emerged to act upon the principles it suggested.

I devoted a good deal of time at Oxford to the Fabian Society and to propaganda on behalf of woman suffrage. These brought me into contact with two of the greatest men I have ever known—George Lansbury and H. W. Nevinson. From the first I learned the meaning and importance of equality, and from the second the meaning and importance of liberty. George Lansbury, too, gave me my first job. He was then editing *The Daily Herald*, and when I left Oxford, in the summer of 1914, he asked me to write editorials for his paper. That was a significant experience for me. It brought me into contact with a good deal of what was most radical in the pre-war socialist movement, and it made me formulate to myself in a coherent way, some of the lessons I learned at Oxford. Contact with Lansbury was a great education. He was absolutely straightforward, absolutely democratic, and entirely fearless. He always meant every word he said, and it never occurred to him to say less than he meant. Through him, I got my first chance of seeing the inside of the socialist movement at first hand, and that at a critical time. Within six weeks of my going to the *Herald* Great Britain was at war. I sought to enlist on the first day. I did not believe in the war. But I did believe that, on the whole, the victory of Germany would mean more evil than its defeat. I was rejected on physical grounds, mainly a weak heart. That rejection altered the whole

course of my life. For I was asked, through the influence of Herbert Fisher, to take a lectureship in history at McGill University, to replace an Oxford don who was anxious to serve. I did not believe that the war would last long. The life of a university teacher was my main ambition; and I was anxious for the leisure to write a book on sovereignty—an issue which seemed to me to lie at the root of the war. I accepted the invitation, expecting to stay a year on the American continent. Instead, I remained there, first at McGill and then, for four years, at Harvard, until 1920.

There is, I think, a sense in which my years on the American continent were the most fundamental experience of my life. I learned there that it was my vocation to be a teacher, that, in whatever other fields I might wander, this was the activity, above all, to which I should devote my energies. I learned, secondly, that to teach political science, it was not enough to read books; one had to learn politics from actual experience of their working, and to seek to make of one's lectures an intimate marriage of theory and practice. I learned, thirdly, that the university scene in America was vitally related to the social environment. One could speculate freely, but one must not question the basic assumptions of the system. When I was at McGill, I made a speech attacking the "bitter-endism" of Mr. Lloyd George, that was immediately followed by urgent demands for my dismissal. When I was at Harvard, the famous Boston police strike occurred. President Lowell at once offered the services of the University to the city. It seemed to me that one ought to know why the police were striking before one accepted the views that the city was right. Accordingly, I took great pains to discover what had led to the strike, and found that it was the outcome of long-accumulated grievances

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met without sympathy or insight. I ventured to say so; and there broke about my head a storm of indignation in which I was described as almost everything from a villain who seduced youth to a Bolshevik who preached revolution. I was solemnly investigated by the Overseers of the university; and though it was decided that I was not to be dismissed, President Lowell explained to me with emphasis that a teacher limited his utility when he spoke on matters of current controversy. I was not, I inferred, to say my say on the living issues of the time if what I said was inconvenient to the rulers of Harvard. Mr. Lowell spoke with kindness, but his implication was clear. Thus though I loved Harvard, and found there friendships that have been of inestimable value to me, I was not sorry when, in the next year, the London School of Economics and Political Science invited me to join its faculty. There I have remained since 1920; and there I hope to remain during my life as a teacher.

But it was not only that I learned in America what I believe to be my vocation. I saw there, more nakedly than I had seen in Europe, the significance of the struggle between capital and labour. I learned how little meaning there can be in an abstract political liberty which is subdued to the control of an economic plutocracy. I saw, too, in strikes like those of Ludlow and Lowell, how the vast machinery of the State is used to crush any movement that questions the authority of those who own economic power. I learned from the imprisonment of Debs and the attacks on La Follette how immense are the pressures to conformity, how fragile the claims of tolerance, whenever the security of a social order is threatened. Not least, I began to perceive, in the difference in the average American attitude to the February and October revolutions in Russia, how profound is the influence of the



property relation in shaping opinion. I came back from America convinced that liberty has no meaning save in the context of equality, and I had begun to understand that equality, also, has no meaning unless the instruments of production are socially owned. But I was still academic enough in experience to believe that this could be proved on rational grounds, and that its proof would be sufficient to win acceptance for it as a principle of social organization. I had associated in America mostly with progressive or academic people who were accustomed to give argument its due weight; and even when, like Mr. Justice Holmes, they were fundamentally conservative in outlook, they were prepared to change their views in the light of discussion. Up to 1920, I think, as I look back, that my socialism was above all the outcome of a sense of the injustice of things as they were. It had not become an insight into the processes of history.

That, I believe, is the main burden of my experience in the eighteen years since I returned to England. They have been full years. From the outset I have been an active member of the Labour Party. I have served on Government committees. I have "deviled" for ministers during the two periods when a Labour Government was in power. I have done a good deal of industrial arbitration. I have helped the trade unions in every important strike, especially the general strike of 1926. Teaching and the writing of books apart, most of my leisure has gone into work for socialism. I learned a great deal from five years as an alderman of a London borough. I have seen, too, a good deal of political journalism from within, not least in those four last brilliant years in which H. W. Massingham edited the *London Nation*. I have been closely concerned with the adult-education movement. Invitations to lecture abroad

have given me first-hand acquaintance with the politics and the universities of France and Spain, pre-Hitler Germany, and the Soviet Union; and I have returned constantly to America, latterly almost year by year, as a fairly close observer of its political powers.

Out of it all, the great lesson I have learned is the broad truth of the Marxian philosophy. What I have seen at first-hand, no less than what I have read, has left me no alternative. I came back to England in 1920 hopeful that I was going to watch the slow permeation of economic relationships by the democratic principle. I have been driven to the conclusion that no class voluntarily abdicates from the possession of power. I have come to learn that the private ownership of the means of production makes it impossible for the democratic idea to transcend the barriers of class without the capture of the State power by the working class. The experience of Russia, the advent of Fascism in central and south-eastern Europe, the attitude of the owning class in Spain and France and the United States to all serious attempts at social reform, the general strike of 1926 and the betrayal of 1931 in England, the new imperialisms of Japan and Italy, have all convinced me that, in large outline, there is no answer to the philosophy of Marx. Men, broadly, think in terms of an experience made and unmade by their class position. Their conceptions of right action are born of the inferences they draw from the experience of that class position. Individuals may transcend it. But taken generally, all our institutions and their working are conditioned by the property relations of any given society. The dominant ideas and principles of that society will be set by the way in which, in any moment, its property relations are working. If they are working well, there will be a period of concession to the multitude which can live only by the sale of its labour

power. If they are working badly, the policy of concession will halt. A system which lives by profit must make profit. If its power to do so is challenged, the owners of the system will seek to destroy the men and the movements which challenge that power.

This is the reason for the decline of liberalism in the post-war epoch. Ours is that age, the coming of which was foreseen by Marx, in which the relations of production are in contradiction with the essential forces of production. Our time is comparable to that of the Reformation, when a similar contradiction appeared. Then as now a new property relation was essential, and then as now those who lived by the privileges inherent in the old were ready to fight for them rather than find the terms of a new accommodation. For when such a contradiction reaches its maturity, the price of continuing concession means the erosion of the privileges associated with private ownership. It means a scale of taxation fatal to the making of profit in international competition. It compels that examination of social foundations which, because it disturbs traditional routines, destroys men's ability to be tolerant in matters of social constitution. For those who have been taught by long use to regard privilege as right are rarely able to adjust themselves to the admission that their right may be built upon what other men have come to experience as wrong.

It is, as I think, in this background that all the central problems of our time have to be set. That it makes the future of capitalist democracy dubious is clear. That the inference from it, in the international sphere, is the necessary relation between capitalism and war is clear also. For, given the present distribution of economic power, the owning class is driven into the search for markets abroad in order to win profit. Thence comes the need for armament. Thence comes also the

politics of imperialism, concession hunting, spheres of influence—that whole gamut of power politics to which the world since 1919 has so grimly accustomed us. The failure of the League of Nations is built upon the fact that it demands from its members the surrender of the policy to which the whole inherent logic of their economic system impels them. We have either to find the way to a resumption of the economic expansion of the Victorian age or enter upon—we have already entered—a period of war and revolution. But we cannot resume that expansion unless we adjust the relations of production in our society to the potential forces of production. Unless we do so, we are bound to have poverty in the midst of potential plenty, restrictionism, that economic nationalism which, all over the world, is lowering the standard of life. Since the State power is directed by men who live by the vested interests represented by these policies, it is at least difficult, and probably impossible, to transcend them within the limits of existing class relations.

I know no other way of explaining adequately the position in which our generation finds itself. The conclusion I draw from it is the necessity of a unified working-class party able either to win political power or, if it meets the challenge of Fascism, to emerge victorious from the conflict. The lesson of Germany and Italy is the clear one that division of the working class means its defeat. The lesson of France is the equally clear one that the attainment of unity at the least enables the working class to give a good account of itself when the challenge comes. And the evidence makes it plain that capitalism in its phase of contraction will respect no principle, however venerable, in its effort to retain the power of the State in its hands. That has been the experience of M. Blum in France; it has been, also, the experience of Mr. Roosevelt in the United States. Each

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had a great popular majority behind him. Each found that the power of his majority was largely nullified by the refusal of the propertied class to co-operate with his purposes. At the historical stage we have reached, the will of the people is unable to use the institutions of capitalist democracy for democratic purposes. For at this stage democracy needs to transform class relations in order to affirm itself; and it will not be allowed to do so by the owning class if it is able to prevent that achievement.

This attitude seems to me the explicit result of post-war experience, and it is, as I have said, the vindication of the analysis Marx made of social phenomena now nearly a century ago. Certain modes of behaviour that I profoundly respect are, I think, ruled out of court by the inferences it involves. It is incompatible with the pacifist doctrine of non-resistance. It rules out, also, the Fabian method of gradualism. That principle was the natural method to recommend in an age of capitalist expansion. In the period of capitalism's decline, its result would, I think, be to give to the owning class a supreme opportunity to organize itself for counter-attack. The real lesson of post-war Germany is the futility of trying to reorganize the economic foundations of capitalism by half measures. That, again, is the inference I would draw from the experience of the two Labour Governments in Great Britain. Each was more anxious to prove its orthodox respectability to its opponents than it was to get on with the work of socialism to which it was committed by public profession. The result was to discourage its friends and to persuade its enemies that the price of social reform was greater than capitalism could afford. The time has come for a central attack on the structure of capitalism. Nothing less than wholesale socialization can remedy the position. The alternative in all Western civilization

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outside the Soviet Union is, I believe, a rapid drift to Fascism in which the working class will be at a definite disadvantage by reason of the division of its forces. That division has already cost it Italy and Germany. It may one day cost it England and the United States as well. In that event, we shall see a new iron age descend upon mankind in which the very memory of civilized living may well become no more than a traditional legend.

I have spoken so far of a framework of experience out of which my social philosophy has been formed. Of religious conviction, for almost as long as I can remember, I have had none. I was brought up in an orthodox Jewish household; but I cannot even remember a period in which either ritual or dogma had meaning for me. Nor has experience of the living religions led me to doubt my doubts. George Lansbury apart, I have rarely met men whose behaviour seems to me to have been influenced by religious principles; and both in England and America I have never been able to see in any of the organized churches a faith in its principles sufficient to make it do serious battle for justice. That is particularly true of England. The history of the Established Church is, predominantly, one of either indifference or antagonism to the main social demands of my time. Its real influence has been to persuade its votaries that the acceptance of the established order is a religious obligation. The problems of historical evidence apart, it has been increasingly clear to me that the main religions, as such, are simply not interested in the problems of social justice. The test, surely, of a creed is not the ability of those who accept it to announce their faith; its test is its ability to change their behaviour in the ordinary round of daily life. Judged by that test, I know no religion that has a moral claim upon the allegiance of men. I can see in few

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individual lives the effect of belief. I cannot see, in the historic process, that the churches have been other than the enemies of reason in thought and of justice in social arrangements. Their concentration upon the life to come—for the reality of which I see no evidence—has, it seems to me, done more than most factors in history to deflect the attention of men from the realities of our life here and now. The result of that deflection has always been to the interest of those who live by privilege.

One whose vocation is teaching can hardly help reflection upon the conditions under which he should practice it. I have never tried to be what it is popular to call an "impartial" teacher. First of all, in my own experience, "impartiality" is an impossible ideal. Either it means the complete erosion of the teacher's personality; or, as is more usual, it means that he suppressed the main premises of his thinking and equates his results with universal truth. I have therefore always sought to do two things: I have tried to present the truth to my students as I see it; and I have sought, as best I can, to make them see all the difficulties inherent in my position. I have never, that is to say, consciously sought to proselytize. It has not been my concern whether students have accepted or not my own particular brand of thought. My business has been to make them see what the problems are, and the way in which one person arrives at his conclusions. But I have never thought it consistent with honesty to be one person in the lecture room and another person outside it. So long as I make my students aware of difficulties to be faced, so long, also, as I try myself honestly to face those difficulties, I have, as I think, done my duty by them.

It has been intensely interesting to me to note the indig-

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nation this attitude has aroused. When, for instance, I lectured in Moscow in 1934, and outlined the difficulties a Socialist Government might encounter in England, Conservative protests in the House of Commons at once led to a threat by the University that I should be investigated. The threat, indeed, came to nothing, largely because some of the more distinguished of my colleagues, together with Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. J. M. Keynes, entered the lists on my side. But it has been significant that colleagues of mine could speak fiercely on the side of the existing order, both within and without the classroom, without even a hint from authority that they were going beyond due bounds. There has been protest because I wrote in socialist newspapers, or because I have been a member of the Labour Party executive. No such protest has been aroused when my colleagues have written in capitalist newspapers, or sat, as one eminent political scientist sits, on the executive of the Liberal Party. Practically all my colleagues in the Department of Economics are strongly opposed to interventionism. But no one has ever suggested that the University should deliberately seek to redress the balance or to interfere with the public expression of their views.

The truth, I think, is the simple one that the limits of academic freedom are set by the social tensions of the society. If these are great, then the frame of reference within which they operate will tend to inhibit free expression in those fields about which men feel keenly. In one age it is religion; in another it is science; in another, again, it is politics or economics. And because universities so largely depend upon public or private generosity for their existence, they will tend to frown upon the teacher whose views are a hindrance to their development. The pressure to conformity is great; it is not easy to feel that one stands in the way of gifts that might



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make possible growth that is of decisive importance to learning. But I do not think that one is entitled to escape by silence the obligations of citizenship. "It makes all the difference in the world," said Coleridge, "whether one puts truth in the first place or in the second." A university that proposes to study matters of social constitution must expect to find true controversy within its halls in an age when these are a matter of profound dispute. If it is not prepared for the free competition of ideas, it is not, in the true sense, a university.

I think, of course, that it is important for the teacher to be capable of detachment about his ideas. He must be ready to surrender beliefs no longer tenable, with the honesty that characterized John Stuart Mill when he gave up the doctrine of the wages fund. But I have not found, in nearly a quarter of a century of academic life, any greater self-criticism in my colleagues who think it a duty to dwell in the ivory tower than in those who, like myself, have been immersed in practical life. Perhaps rather the contrary. For those who have dwelt in the ivory tower have, only too often, thereby cut themselves off from the healthy experience of criticism. Their tendency is to refuse to examine the consequences of their beliefs lest this commit them to some action in the world of life. They devote a large part of their energy to technical minutiae. They avoid the basic problems of valuation. They refuse to admit that, as Plato said, true knowledge compels to action. They pursue a discipline of conduct that enables them to evade the obligation to act as citizens. They reprehend the teachers who are active in the battle. But they do not realize that their own refusal to choose is itself a choice. More than that: their refusal is only too often a part of that inertia which, perhaps more than any other quality in life, helps those who perpetrate injustice to live by their wrongdoing.

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I am, at least, certain of this: that no one can teach politics seriously who does not know politics at first hand. It was, I think, Bacon who pointed out that most books on politics that count are the books of men who have been active in the political battle. There is a quality of experience in the exercise of actual responsibility which is of vital importance to the analysis of experience. Certainly I have learned more about the problem of administration from actual work in local government than from all the textbooks I ever read. Certainly, also, my effort, however humble, to assist in shaping the policy of the Labour Party has taught me more about how political parties really work than I have learned from Ostrogorski and Michels and the other classic authorities. I think it is a reasonable criticism of a good deal of academic work in politics that, because the writer has not seen things from the inside, he tends to mistake the formal appearance for the living reality. The way to know men is to mingle with them; and a university that consciously separates itself from life is, I suspect, unlikely to influence its quality. The captaincy in the Hampshire grenadiers was not entirely useless to the historian of the Roman empire; long years in the service of Shaftesbury were vital to the thought of Locke, and the election campaigns for the London County Council taught Graham Wallas a good deal he could not have learned in books about human nature in politics. The professor's business, so far as he can fulfil it, is to be a whole man; and without what I may call clinical experience of politics in action I do not think he is likely to get a full perspective of the nature of things.

As I look back on the dead years, two things stand out for me as of inestimable value. I grant freely that, beside the measure of desire, the things one achieves seem, in retrospect,



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pitifully small. I grant, also, that the defeats one encounters are often so bitter as to make one doubt, at times, the worth of the whole adventure. A teacher, above all, who knows how little education can do, who sees the academic generations pass with such stark swiftness, is not tempted easily to exaggerate the influence of any save the outstanding personalities of history. The brief procession of human life seems, to the historian's gaze, little more than the flicker of a dying candle against eternity.

Yet there are, I think, two goods which make the adventure endlessly worth while. The first is the sense that every active socialist has of being what Heine called a "soldier in the liberation war of humanity." Certain memories that come back: a handshake and a brief word from Arthur Henderson after the election of 1929; the eager faces of a score of miners at a day school on politics in a northern village in which there was little save hope upon which to feed; the set determination of a thousand trade-union officials when they decided upon the general strike in May of 1926, men who risked all for the sake of solidarity; the moment when, in 1934, we took over the government of London into socialist hands; or when I have sat in Madrid and heard the defenders of Spanish democracy count life as nothing beside the defence of their cause; or when, in Moscow, I heard some of the leaders of the November Revolution describe the magic of that day when Lenin inaugurated the victory of the first socialist revolution in the world; these, after all, give one the sense that, at bottom, there is reality in the dream.

And there is the glory of love and friendship. Of the first I do not speak; its beauty defies the written word. Of the second, I will say only that to have known men like Mr. Justice Holmes, like Lansbury and Henry Nevinson, like

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J. L. Hammond and Graham Wallas, like the Webbs and Stafford Cripps, is to have warmed one's hands at the central fire of life. What I have had, too, in affection from Felix Frankfurter is greater even than he has given me in insights; more than that I could not say. From it all, despite its pain and disappointments, I emerge, so far, with the sense that I have lived near great events and known men and women intimately who have served great causes greatly. As I look back, I would not ask for wealth or power; I would ask only for the supreme gift of friends. That I have had in full measure. It has given me a sense of fellowship that has given to life a happiness beyond the power of sorrow to destroy.

Lin Yutang

*Lin Yutang's mellow and humane interpretations of Chinese life and culture have proved of inestimable service to curious Western readers. His knowledge of Eastern civilization is matched by his sensitive appreciation of Occidental culture.*

*He was born in 1895, in Chang Chow, Fukien Province, China. He has an A.M. from Harvard and a doctor of philosophy degree from Leipzig. From 1923 to 1926 he held a professorship at Peking National University. In his native land he has won a reputation for his literary criticism and edited a number of literary periodicals. His books in Chinese are numerous and influential. He is also master of a charming English style. The English-speaking world knows him through his "My Country and My People" (1935) and "The Importance of Living" (1937). He has edited "The Wisdom of Confucius" (1938).*



# Lin Yutang

## I

LIKE ALL OTHER common men, I have a common philosophy of life. Curiously I have always been repelled by idle philosophical speculations; terms like Plato's "idea," Spinoza's "essence," "substance," and "attribute," and Kant's "categorical imperative" have always aroused in me a sense of suspicion that the philosopher was getting too much involved in his own thought. A thing may sound so logical you are convinced it must be wrong. The moment a philosophical system becomes too impressive or logically beautiful, I become suspicious. The more complacent, self-satisfied, and foolishly logical systems, like Hegel's philosophy of history and Calvin's doctrine of total depravity, arouse in me only a smile. On a still lower level, the political ideologies, like Fascism and Communism as they are actually represented to-day, seem to me but caricatures of thought itself. For Communism I have a much higher respect than for Fascism, because the former is based on an idealistic love, while the latter is based on a cynical contempt, for the common man; but as they are practised to-day, both are to me products of Western intellectualism and show to me a curious lack of self-restraint. More and more I am impressed by the wisdom of Confucius: "I know now why the moral life is not practised. The wise mistake the moral law for something higher than it really is; and the foolish do not know enough what moral law is. I know now why the moral law is not understood. The noble

natures want to live too high, high above their ordinary self; and the ignoble natures do not live high enough, i.e. not up to their moral ordinary true self. There is no one who does not eat and drink, but few there are who really know flavour."

And so while I have the utmost patience for science, when it is discussing or bisecting the small minutiae of life, I have no patience for hair-splitting philosophy. Yet in their simplest terms, science, religion, and philosophy have always fascinated me from childhood on. Stated in the simplest terms, science is but a sense of curiosity about life, religion is a sense of reverence for life, literature is a sense of wonder at life, art is a taste for life, while philosophy is an attitude toward life, based on a greater or lesser, but always limited, comprehension of the universe as far as we happen to know it. I regret profoundly that I was presented with the choice of enrolling in the school of arts or the school of science as a freshman when I did not know anything about either, and always feel that perhaps I made a wrong choice by choosing arts. But my love for science has never ceased, and I have tried to make up for it by constant reading of popular summaries. If by science is meant an eternal curiosity about life and the universe, then I may still claim to be a scientist. Also I am so profoundly religious by nature that the religions often make me furious. My being a pastor's son does not explain it all.

In saying that I have a common philosophy of life, therefore, I merely mean that, as an ordinary educated man, I have tried to adopt a reasonable and, as far as possible, harmonious attitude toward life, toward living, toward human society and the universe and God. The fact that I am naturally predisposed to suspect philosophical systems does not mean that I disbelieve in the possibility of a more or less unified and harmonious view of life, issuing in a harmonious attitude

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toward the business of living—money, marriage, success, the family, patriotism, and politics. I believe rather that the distrust of involved and airtight systems makes the adoption of a reasonable, unified view of life fairly simple and easy.

I know science's limitations, but with my worship of science I always let the scientist do the spadework, having complete confidence in him, knowing that he is thoroughly conscientious. I let him discover the physical universe for me—the physical universe that I desire so much to know. Then, after getting as much as possible of the scientist's knowledge of the physical universe, I remember that the man is greater than the scientist, that the latter cannot tell us everything, cannot tell us about the most important things, the things that make for happiness. Then I have to rely on *bon sens*—that eighteenth-century word which deserves reviving a little. Call it *bon sens*, or common sense, or intuition, or intuitive thinking, it is that type of thinking which alone can help us attain the truth and wisdom of living. True thinking is always that type of thinking, a sort of warm, emotional, half-humorous, and half-whimsical thinking, mixed with a grain of idealism and a grain of delightful nonsense. Give imagination a little play, and then restrain it by a little hard cynicism, like the kite and its string. The history of mankind seems like kiteflying: sometimes, when the wind is favourable, we let go the string a little and the kite soars a little higher; sometimes the wind is too rough and we have to lower it a little, and sometimes it gets caught among tree branches; but to reach the upper strata of pure bliss—ah, perhaps never!

For the world is both a good and a bad world, and man is both a noble and a wicked creature. Life is often so happy and often so sad, and human society is often so cruel, and yet often not lacking in true kindness. Knowing that this is the

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case, how shall we proceed except by eminently kind, tolerant, and ironic thinking? Great wisdom consists in not demanding too much of human nature, and yet not altogether spoiling it by indulgence. One must try to do one's best, and at the same time, one must, when rewarded by partial success or confronted by partial failure, say to himself, "I have done my best." That is about all the philosophy of living that one needs.

The fact that human society and human nature are so imperfect is what makes life exciting to me. It makes me grateful to have been born a man, of which I am very proud. Interested as I am in the physical universe, it is in man, in his loves and hatreds, his noble achievements and ludicrous failures, that I am interested. I am interested in man because the way he loves and hates and behaves in general is so funny. That is to say, I am fundamentally sympathetic to man, which is only natural, as he is my own species. Take, for instance, some of the Fascist nations. How I despise their chiefs and their slobbering patriotism! How I see in them images of beasts filled with greed and cunning and egotism; and how they delude themselves! How I shudder when they proceed from action to speech to defend themselves, and offend the very words "peace," "justice," "self-determination" by their contamination! How infinitely ridiculous seem to me their propaganda chiefs; and I wonder what they think of their own people and of themselves, these small men! How they destroy the statue of Heine and rape the Universities of Gottingen and Heidelberg, and how they join in the mad dance around their golden calf, the pagan gods! Yet in these very nations, I see the great common people. In the most "warlike" nations, I refuse to admit that more than 1 per cent of the people, down in their hearts, welcome another war. Is not life still beautiful in those

countries—beautiful in its marrying and giving births and scientific researches?

This is typical of the attitude we ought to take toward life in general, an attitude of tolerant irony. It is the attitude of expecting something finer and nobler of human nature than what it often appears to be; and, in expecting, not forgetting to forgive; an attitude of forgiving human nature for its shortcomings, and, in forgiving, not forgetting to chide it for not doing better. In some such fashion, we, the human species, shall always proceed further and higher. That is the warm, emotional, sympathetic thinking that I mean. Here the intellect is going to help us very little. After science has done its spadework, religion, art, literature, and philosophy must take their rightful place in human life. These things seem poorly correlated in the modern world; the specialist has usurped the man. For science can never replace art, religion, literature, and philosophy. Besides knowledge, we must retain, and never lose, a taste for life, a reverence for life, a sense of wonder at life, and a proper and reasonable attitude toward life. The taste for life must be unspoiled, the reverence for life must be truly profound, the sense of wonder must be fully alive, and the attitude toward life must be harmonious and reasonable.

## II

But let us first examine what the spadework of science has done for us, for science represents to us sound knowledge as far as it is perceivable by our intelligence. While science cannot tell us everything, yet in those things that science tells us about, there is no sense in setting oneself against the light of knowledge. As we are both flesh and spirit inextricably compounded,

what we know about the flesh must influence our views of the spirit. And whatever else science may do, it certainly does not destroy, but rather increases, our sense of wonder at and reverence for life.

I am not speaking about the influence of science on the external conditions of our life, which is extensive enough, but rather of its unconscious influence on our views of things. Since Galileo's time, this influence has been so vast and deep that it has enveloped all of us. Say what you will, the modern man's views of God, of the universe, of the atom, of the basis and nature and constitution of matter, of man's creation and past history, of his goodness or badness, of his soul and its possible survival, of what to do with his body, of sin, punishment, the character of God's vengeance and forgiveness, of man's relationship with the animal kingdom—all these notions have undergone definite changes and are not those of the man of Galileo's time. On the whole, I may sum it up by saying that, in our minds, God has become bigger and man smaller, while on the other hand, the body has become cleaner and immortality vaguer. Thus all the most important notions involved in the practice of religion—God, man, sin, and immortality (or salvation)—have been, or should be, overhauled. All these things seem to me inter-related with each other and related to the teachings of science.

It is not because I am irreligious, but rather because I am supremely interested in religion, that I cannot help tracing how the progress of scientific knowledge impinges on the externals of religious belief. While the Sermon on the Mount is left practically intact, as is also the beauty of the moral realm and of noble living, we must bravely admit that science has played havoc with the paraphernalia of religion, or the stock notions with which the religions have always worked, like the

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notion of sin. What I want to point out is that these notions have changed very gradually and imperceptibly, almost without our knowing it, and that this influence has been an *unconscious* influence. Take the most obvious and superficial notion of hell in religion. I think not one in a hundred undergraduates or graduates to-day, perhaps not one in a thousand, believes in a literal hell. No one explicitly argues for or against the existence of hell; everyone assumes it is not worth arguing about. And while such stock notions (hell, sin, origin of evil, punishment, heaven, vicarious suffering) have undergone a profound change, religion, or at least organized religion, certainly must be affected.

When I say that in our minds God has become bigger and man smaller, I mean *bigger* and *smaller physically*. These things simply cannot be helped. Since we cannot but conceive of God as being at least commensurate with His universe, we naturally become, or I did become, awe-struck and spellbound as modern astronomy steadily revealed a wider and wider physical universe to us. The greatest enemy to old religions and all anthropocentric faiths is the two-hundred-inch diameter telescope. When I took up a New York paper a few weeks ago and read that some astronomer had discovered a new star cluster 250,000 light-years away from the earth, my notion of man's place in nature became downright ridiculous. These things are not unimportant in their bearings on our belief; they are highly important. I long ago reached the point where I realized how small and puny and humble I looked in God's, or the universe's eyes, until the idea of a complicated system of downfall, punishment, and redemption seemed as absurd and preposterous to me as if I were to imagine myself evolving a system of punishment and redemption for a being less than the size of an ant's feeler, or even of a fair-sized maggot. We

are individually not worth God's anger. We are not worth a damn, literally.

Science, or modern knowledge in general, has changed our idea of good and evil, of retribution, and of the worth or necessity of vicarious suffering. The idealized contrast of sin and perfection is no longer tenable. A better knowledge of man's heritage of animal instincts or savage instincts, products of a natural course of evolution, has rendered meaningless the age-old debate over the original goodness or badness of human nature. The fighting instinct, the hunger instinct, the sex instinct, the herd instinct, and in general the superior power of instinct over that of reason, all become readily understandable. You cannot blame man for having the sex instinct any more than you can blame the beaver for having the same; consequently, the whole mysticism about the evil of the flesh, upon which religion was built, seems singularly devoid of meaning. The medieval, or monastic, or typical "religious" attitude toward the body and toward this material life is therefore gone, and in its place has come a healthier and more sensible view of man himself and of his earthly occupations. I believe this attitude is the attitude of the average thinking man of to-day. In other words, the modern man's feeling is that this earthly life is not "damned." To say, therefore, that God was angry with man for being made imperfect, or for being merely halfway on the road of evolution, does not quite make sense, and to say that He would punish man for the same is equally unconvincing. But to imagine that God could not forgive without making somebody suffer for it is a travesty. It is to impute to God the savage notion of vicarious suffering, which we ourselves are not willing to practice in civilized life to-day. In one of Somerset Maugham's plays, the missionary lady who is enraged by an act of human sacrifice among the



savages and tries to prevent it does not realize that her own religion is based on that same savage notion of human sacrifice to appease a God. My general position is that, God being so great and man being so small, God simply would not have bothered. The whole idea seems too artificial and complicated. As in physics we discard a theory when it becomes too artificial and complicated in the light of new facts, so we must discard this theory of redemption for something simpler.

What repels me particularly to-day in religion is its emphasis on sin. I have no consciousness of sin and no feeling of being damned. I think many men, looking at the problem coldly and sensibly, have come to take the same position. While not living a saint's life, I believe I have lived a fairly decent human life. Legally I am perfect, while morally I have imperfections. But all these moral imperfections or delinquencies, like occasional lying and neglect of duty, all added up together and placed before my mother as the judge, would probably make me deserve a three years' imprisonment at the most, but certainly not the damnation of hell-fire. This is not boasting; most of my friends do not deserve five years at the worst. And if I can face the memory of my mother, I can face God. She could not condemn me to eternal hell-fire. This I know. And I believe God is reasonable and understanding. Because the modern church is still determined to contemplate sin exclusively, and because missionaries in making converts always start out by injecting the consciousness of sin, I am unable to accept it.

At the other end of the Christian teaching is the notion of perfection. Perfection was the state of man in the Garden of Eden, and perfection is also the state aimed at in the future heaven. Why perfection? I cannot understand it. It does not even spring from the artistic instinct. The idea developed by

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the logic of Asia Minor of the first centuries was that we wanted to live in heaven in the company of God, and that consequently unless we were perfect, we could not do so. This perfection is therefore of a mystical character, having no logical basis except the desire of man to live in a heaven of perfect bliss. I doubt whether, if the Christian were not promised a heaven of perfect bliss to live in, he would care to be perfect. In actual daily life, this notion has no import whatsoever. I therefore repudiate also for myself the ideal of the perfect man. The ideal man is one who has tried honestly to do his best to live a decent life and to see the truth according to his lights. The ideal man for me is merely a reasonable man, willing to admit his mistakes and correct them. I don't ask for better creatures on this earth.

## III

Such a revelation of belief must be profoundly disturbing to many sincere Christians. Yet unless we are ruthlessly honest, we are not worthy to know the truth. In this matter we ought to behave as the scientists do. It is generally as painful for us to discard old beliefs as for the scientists to discard the old laws of physics and accept new theories. In fact, even the scientists always struggle against new theories, but somehow they are a fair-minded lot and accept or discard theories as their scientific conscience dictates. Truth is always disturbing, as the sudden impact of light is painful to the eye. Yet after the mental or physical eye is adjusted to the new light, the situation is not so bad after all. It is the children of little faith who are easily scared.

What then have we left? A great deal. The contours of old

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religions have been changed and their outlines blurred, but religion remains and always will remain. I am speaking of religion as belief coloured with emotion, an elemental sense of piety or reverence for life, summing up man's certainty as to what is right and noble. One might think that by analysing the spectrums of the rainbow or creating artificial rainbows at fountains in squares, our belief in Noah's pact with God would be destroyed and we would therefore be left in a world of satanic scepticism. But no, the rainbow is just as beautiful to look at, if one will only look. Not a bit of the beauty and mystery of the rainbow and the river breeze is destroyed.

There is a world of simpler beliefs left for us. I like them because they are simpler and perfectly natural. What I call the old "machinery" of salvation is gone; in fact the very object of that salvation for me is gone. The paternal God whom the old Salvation Army lady preached while brandishing her black umbrella, the God who takes an almost inquisitive interest in our trivial personal affairs, is also gone. The perfect logical chain of original perfection, downfall, damnation, vicarious suffering, and back to perfection again is definitely broken. Hell is gone, and after it heaven. In this philosophy of living, I believe we simply have to leave heaven out; we can't be too sure about it. It may frighten us, but it should not. For we still have a marvellous universe, physical in its aspects and almost spiritual in its workings, moved as it were by forces unseen. The wonders of the heavenly bodies and life on earth are still there, rich, overwhelmingly rich. Not just barely nice and useful for living, but intoxicating us with their beauty and their mystery. Behind it all we feel a Great Force—some call it God—so overwhelmingly great as to compel in us the greatest reverence. And while God is there, it is surely enough that life with all its intoxicating beauty and variety and mystery

is before us. Forget the unknown and uncertain heaven, and live close to the rocks and the trees, and after watching the sunset watch the twinkling stars. This earth, this visible universe, I say, is enough! It is, in fact, spiritual, visibly so. We ought to be contented with it. And sometimes mixed with a sense of reverence for the great author of things, we ought also to feel a sense of gratitude.

The spirituality of man, too, is untouched. The moral realm is untouched and untouchable by the realm of physics. Understanding the rainbow is physics, but delight at the rainbow is morality. Understanding does not, and should not, and cannot, destroy the delight. This is the world of simple beliefs, requiring no theology and no hypothetical rewards and punishments. It is enough that man's heart is still touched by beauty and goodness and justice and kindness. Knowing that God who is the author of all things is ever so high above us, how can we live except by the highest and best in us? We should be ashamed to live otherwise. To live the good life, to act according to our highest and noblest instincts is merely the right thing to do. It is in fact to be religious, to have reverence, for this life. Granted that we have the animal heritage, that we have instincts that are survivals of our savage and animal ancestry—the "sin," if you like, that we carry with us in our history of development—it is only common sense to say and believe that we have a higher and a lower self. There are instincts noble and instincts ignoble. Without believing that the ignoble instincts are attributable to a Satan working in us, it still does not follow that we have to follow the ignoble instincts at the expense of the noble instincts. As Mencius says, "The sense of mercy is found in all men; the sense of shame is found in all men; the sense of respect is found in all men; the sense of right and wrong is found in all men." Again as Mencius, the

advocate of the higher life and the greater self, puts it, "He who attends to his greater self becomes a great man, and he who attends to his smaller self becomes a small man."

But though materialism does not logically follow the disappearance of the old religious point of view, morally it does follow, so curiously are we human beings made up. The modern world is on the whole increasingly materialistic as it becomes increasingly less religious. Religion has always meant to man a unified body of valid beliefs with a divine sanction behind it. It is something which man feels instinctively and emotionally rather than believes intellectually. The loss of religion would therefore be a loss to mankind. Cold rationalistic beliefs cannot take the place of religion. Furthermore, it has the sanctity of age, carrying with it or in it the force of an old tradition. It is not good that this tradition be lost; but this has happened. The modern age is moreover not the kind of age to produce new founders of religion. We are too critical for it. And the force of an individual's private belief about rational conduct compared with the force of a great religion is like a gutter pool compared with a great river. This private belief is good enough, and I believe fully adequate, for the superior man, but not enough for the inferior man, in Confucian terms. We have really landed in a modern dilemma.

It testifies to the wisdom of Moses and Confucius that they both tried to give the laws of civil life a religious sanction. We cannot produce a Moses or a Confucius in the modern age. I believe that the only kind of religious belief left for the modern man is a kind of mysticism in the broadest sense of the word, such as preached by Lao-tse. Broadly speaking, it is a kind of reverence and respect for the moral order of the universe, philosophic resignation to the moral order, and the effort to live our life in harmony with this moral order. The

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*tao* in Taoism exactly means this thing. It is broad enough to cover the most advanced present and future theories of the universe. It is both mystical and practical. For it breeds the philosophic temper. It is, for me, the only antidote against modern materialism.

The antidote against modern materialism lies obviously in the contemplative life, in man becoming philosophic. I do not know whether I am a Taoist. I simply have not thought of the question. But I do know that Taoism is a powerful deterrent against the excesses of the external life. Without calling oneself a Taoist—since I heartily dislike all isms—an educated man must come to have a unified and philosophic view of himself, of his fellow-men, of life, and the universe. The process of education mainly consists in clearing oneself of a number of foolish presumptions, humbugs, and prejudices that beset the common man's mind. Some of the commonest assumptions and presumptions that are dangerous to a man's spiritual life are our worship of wealth and power and success, and beliefs in luck, adversity, and triumph over others, and the reality of the material world. For all these illusions of the material world, Taoism has rather specific antidotes. Above all, it enables us to have a unified view of ourselves, our fellow beings, of God, and the universe. It teaches the spirituality of things. It teaches us to see the material phenomena as spiritual phenomena and life as manifestation of the laws of continuous growth and decay. It also teaches eternal justice. Thus man is fortified with a mysticism which is all-embracing. Then he may call this conception Tao or Truth or God or the Laws of the Universe, as he likes, and he does not have even to go to a church to worship it. You can't even pray to Tao. But emotionally it satisfies.

I can even be quite specific. Against the materialism of

success, the Taoist has a kindly, indulgent smile. Materialism looks foolish rather than evil in the light of Taoism. Hatred and envy are diluted with laughter. Against the excesses of luxurious living, it teaches the simple life and, against the urban life, it teaches the love of nature. Against ruthless competition and struggle, it teaches the emptiness of the prize, the defeat of the conqueror, and the victory of the humiliated. Against the foolish desire for individual immortality, it teaches the immortality of the universe and of life itself. Against overaction it teaches inaction and contemplation. Against achievement, it teaches being. Against strength, it teaches softness. Against the most sinister force of modern life, the belief in brute force as exemplified by the Fascist nations, it teaches the important doctrine that you are not the only clever guy in the world, and you get nowhere by trying to push ahead, that nobody is a damn fool all the time, and that the law of action and reaction works eternally, bringing vengeance upon those who violate it. It works toward world peace by breeding the fundamental peaceful temper. All these things, while somewhat mystical, can be put in plain words that the common man can understand. The Taoist does not make mystical deductions; he merely teaches you to observe life carefully by the long view. If you look at life as carefully as the Taoist, you will agree with him.

In the reconstruction of religion in other respects, I do not think we shall be so successful. I have defined religion as an elemental sense of reverence for life, summing up man's beliefs as to what is right and noble, in a unified view of God and life and man. The body of valid beliefs naturally changes from age to age. These valid beliefs form the content of religion and the content must change from time to time. "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath" was, for instance, an important tenet

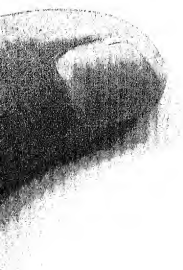
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of religion, but it is entirely unimportant to-day for the modern man. Probably "Remember to keep holy the international treaties," if it could receive the emotional colour of a religious belief, would contribute more to our happiness in the present age. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods" can be liberally interpreted, but it would certainly be better if man to-day could believe religiously, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's territory." It would have much more real force. "Thou shalt not kill" can be considerably improved by adding these phrases "not even people of a different country." These beliefs should be religiously valid, but they are not. These are what I call the content of religious belief. Their importance entitles them to a place among religious beliefs in the new unified view of God and life and man, but it takes time for a newly knighted baronet to grow a halo of aristocracy. Living in a truly international community, we lack an international religion. About racial prejudices, for instance, we should all be taught to believe that the difference between peoples of any two countries is much smaller than that between the gentlemen and the gangsters of any particular country. Let us try to believe that the gentleman is international, even as gangsters are international. To-day, however, the gangsters are internationally-minded, but the gentlemen are still "patriots."

We are living in a cynical age. Man is less optimistic about himself, or has less faith in humanity than the French encyclopedists of a century and half ago. Less than ever do we as a whole believe in liberty, equality, and fraternity. Diderot and D'Alembert might really be ashamed of us as their intellectual descendants. International morality has never sunk so low. The Spanish War, as a piece of extraordinary human chicanery and shamelessness, was about the lowest kind of war the



creatures of this earth, birds, beasts, and men included, ever started. It was the most immoral war in all history. "For sheer shamelessness we have to hand it to the people of the nineteen-thirties," some future historian will write. As far as killing each other is concerned, and all that slobbering patriotism of the Fascist countries, we are living in the age of super-barbarism. Mechanized barbarism is barbarism none the less. In such a cynical age, only the supreme cynicism of a Taoist is not cynical. The law of action and reaction again. The world will right itself. Take a long view and you are comforted.



Emil Ludwig

*Emil Ludwig began his career as a writer of plays in verse. Only at the end of his thirties did he begin the creation of the psychological essays and biographies that have won him world-wide fame. His best books are noted for their dramatic power and vividness. Some of them have been translated into twenty-six languages, notably his book on the outbreak of the war, "July 14." While it would be hard to choose among them, perhaps his most enduring work will prove his magnificent biography of a river, "The Nile."*

*Emil Ludwig was born in Germany in 1881 but has for many years been a Swiss citizen. He was educated at Breslau and Heidelberg. Some of his best-known publications include his lives of Jesus, Goethe, Bismarck, Napoleon, William II, and Lincoln; "Three Titans" (1930); "Schliemann of Troy" (1931); "The Nile" (1936); "The Nile in Egypt" (1937); "Cleopatra" (1937). Most of these books are published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. He has also written several novels and many plays.*

*The essay that follows is translated from the German by Grace McConnaughey.*

# Emil Ludwig

I BELIEVE IN THE WISDOM and beneficence of nature; but he does not give everything to all. I believe in the power of the gods; but they give the main chance to the strong. I believe in the dictatorship of fate; but fate favours the creative man and is justifiable, therefore, in the long run.

To make this statement clear, I must first sketch the path by which I arrived at this belief. Son of a naturalist and humanist, I was brought up in the precepts of neither Moses nor Jesus. Moral values were self-evident. I learned the Ten Commandments, indeed, but the foundation for a respectable way of life was laid by the example of my parents. The widest tolerance toward all forms of belief was exemplified in my father, who as physician devoted himself to his fellow men and as scholar trusted nature. He showed his children that over us rules a power which is always the same, though called by many names. Brought up to distrust force and to reverence the spiritual and beautiful, I learned to venerate, beside the Greeks, two prophets—Goethe and Beethoven. In the half century that has followed I have come to know none greater.

At the same time I learned responsibility. We did not acquire the habit of taking refuge behind the fatherland or behind our race, least of all behind the suffering of a prophet said to have died for us all. The whole structure of my world would break down were I to believe that another than myself could give me salvation.

And why salvation? From what? The thought of man's fall and his original sin as the medium between God and

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myself, as well as the whole conception of a transfigured Son of God who will save me from the hell burning beneath paradise: this is alien to me. I have never disturbed this belief in others, nor have I envied them for it. To me Jesus—whom I was later to represent as a fighter and prophet—was as worthy of reverence as Socrates, because he died for truth, as men are doing again to-day.

At an early age there grew in me a striving to be as God intended me. This was to be attained not by prayer and ecstasies but only by a laborious development of those inborn capacities which I regard as the gifts of nature, namely, my health and vigour, my spirit and imagination.

All my development since my youth I owe to one alone. Goethe has served as my leader not only in all realms of thought and deed but throughout the different decades of my life. Goethe and Nietzsche remain the only philosophers whom I have read; none among my contemporaries is known to me. My philosophical studies, thus limited, set my feet in the right path and left my mind free to approach God through contemplation of his works as found in nature, in music, and in great characters.

Problems of guilt and expiation have no meaning in my life. My point of view is that we sin in falling short of such efficiency as nature may expect, according to her gifts to us. On this account I do not believe that there is such a thing as thwarted genius, or that a man may die before his time. Nature soon recalled great creative geniuses like Mozart, Schubert, Byron, and Giorgione when they had given all that lay within them. Goethe, Beethoven, Shakespeare, and Leonardo were given a longer time, in order that they might complete their work according to the more measured tempo of their lives. I have no sympathy for the baffled poet or

statesman who blames his failure on the misunderstanding of the rest of the world.

In fact, my sympathy for the higher forms of mankind steadily wanes, while my sympathy for the animal world increases. I cannot feel for a vanquished dictator, but my sympathy goes out to any dog struck down by an automobile. However, I do not hold the exercise of sympathy to be a service for which anyone may recommend his soul to God. Nature puts upon no man an unbearable burden; if her limits be exceeded, man responds by suicide. I have always respected suicide as a regulator of nature. But a believing or philosophic man who has pondered upon God should call upon the sympathy of man, or upon that of God, only when in the direct extremity. When I do this, I am unable to determine whether my prayer may still be termed monotheistic.

But it is of little importance, for whether I pray to a single power or to the many manifestations of it, whether I worship the *πολυ* or the *πau*, in which dwells the same single power, the difference is not great enough to warrant the war of words or weapons that men have waged. What I worship is the creative power, and that alone. Goethe called it *Gott-Natur*, seeking a way out by this compound expression. In the prime of his life, Goethe voiced this concept in an ode. For twenty years it has hung on the wall beside my bed.

Nature! By whom we are surrounded and enfolded, powerless to step without her limits, impotent to sink deeper within her. Unbidden, she takes us up and carries us along in the cycle of her dance, until we weary and fall from her arms. . . . Although we continually influence her, we have no power over her. She is manifest in her countless children—this mother. . . . She is pleased with illusion; she punishes, like a harsh tyrant, him who destroys it in himself or in others. But him who follows her trustfully she presses close to her heart. Her children are

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without number. She is miserly toward none, but she has favourites on whom she spends lavishly and for whom much is sacrificed. Her protection is given to the great. Her drama is ever new, because she continually provides new spectators. Life is her most wonderful invention, and death a master stroke whereby she may have much life. She envelops man in darkness and spurs him eternally toward the light. She makes him dependent upon the earth, slow and heavy, yet always is stirring him up. . . . She is generous; praise be to her and all her works. She is wise and calm. . . . She has brought me thus far; she will lead me out. I place myself in her hands without reserve. Do with me as she may, she will not spite her own creation. All lies at her door. She alone is culpable, and she alone is deserving of credit.

Since I have not the systems of the philosophers and lack the commentaries of the theologians (nor do I miss them), I can reconstruct my faith only from the feelings which possess me when I contemplate God's works. It seems possible, indeed, to draw near to him without a systematized belief or form of thought. Goethe has said it in the cold sentence: "Let us seek nothing behind the phenomena; they themselves are the lesson."

This acceptance of the world through the sensuous apprehension of it is possible and bearable only to one who is daily conscious of the reality of death but nevertheless makes out his programme for days and years to come, as if he were immortal. This paradox is similar to that in which we stubbornly postulate freedom of the will and at the same time believe, perforce, in a fate which must someday cross its path. It was only by virtue of these paradoxes that Goethe justified to himself his constant activity as an escape from destructive powers. Belief and accomplishment were so closely allied in him that at eighty years of age he spoke the daring words, "The conviction of my continuation after



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death springs from my belief in action. For if I continue to work ceaselessly until my death, then nature is obliged to give me another form of existence when the present one can no longer house my spirit."

The force of this argument impressed me even in my youth, and I have arrived at similar sources of a faith which rests, fundamentally, upon realistic forms. On this account my belief is all the more easily associated with a pantheism which sees God in all manifestations of nature, whether peopled with discrete gods or seen as one all-inherent spirit. In our romantic youth, we were prone to see dryads and nymphs, satyrs and hippocampi in the woods and streams, as I have so represented them in choruses and drama. To-day, nature seems to me filled with a universal rustling which I need not personify. I feel this before an open geological atlas, or while walking, or when looking up into the evening sky.

From so deep a feeling of the animate quality of all things there comes of itself a belief in the symbolism of all being. The symbolic character of every happening shines with overwhelming power into the heart of him who sees each creature as the representative of others and to whom all appearances are but the varied play of the same creative will. Instead of isolated fates which concern his personal grief or joy, he sees tributaries of life which issue, perhaps by winding ways, but inevitably, in the open sea. There, in the great ocean, all the streams unite, later to change into clouds and rain and, finally, to become streams again. Here, for me, ends every question as to the future. "Toying with ideas of immortality," said the aged Goethe, "is for the genteel classes and for women, especially, who have nothing else to do. But a capable man who has something to think about, here and now, and who

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must daily struggle, fight, and act lets the future world take care of itself and is active and useful in this one."

Goethe's final wisdom, "All mortality is but a symbol," gives me a similar feeling of peace, for it takes the shock from occurrences without destroying their illusory charm. When I have learned to see the negative and unsuccessful aspects of my work, my environment, or my country as symbolic, then I have learned to bear them.

When we look upon the events of our life, in their rise and fall, their ripening and withering, their success and failure, as among the experiments of one and the same creator with millions of his creations, we cannot but feel ourselves encompassed by a circle of circumstance which neither we nor our more fortunate rivals can break through. "Everything," wrote Goethe, "in which man seriously interests himself stretches out to infinity, against this his only weapon is unremitting industry."

From such realization of the relativity of each individual happiness, I have built myself a harmonious labyrinth whose blueprint I have never seen and cannot, therefore, describe. It is the labyrinth in every man's soul. Only faith in a guiding Ariadne can give us confidence as we thread its mazes. Ariadne is faith in the logic of all happenings or, more simply, the goodness of God.

The more definitely a belief in the wisdom of nature took shape in me the less I admired the ascendance of one man over another and the more I admired man's victories over the elements, which I attempted to portray in writing. Not only my excursions into history but those through the woods and mountains have essentially changed in character. The thirty years of my life spent in the country brought this about. Long past is the romanticism of youth, when the Latin name

of a moss or the sight of a telegraph wire disturbed me. Trees and animals, stones and clouds, affect me much more strongly since I have begun to know something of their sources and their life.

Out of such feelings I have come, in the historical world also, to be conscious of an unseen destiny, of a necessity. It is this that I have tried to express in my biographical studies. Never studying history but always the human heart, I transferred my knowledge from the present into the past, and sought there to construe the great characters in their immediate manifestation, first of all, and then according to the circumstances. One should never represent a man simply as an individual but always as the symbol of a human type, an aspiring child of the gods in battle with himself. To me, at least, individual destinies are interesting only as such symbols. For character is nothing other than the Biblical pound which the master gave to his servant that he might invest it. The amount of the gift is less important than the purpose and strength to make something of it. It is in the crossways of genius and character, therefore, that I see the critical region whence arise the significant figures of yesterday and to-day. In my researches, whether in the immediate present or in the past, I have always found more talent rusting through lack of character than strong characters failing to advance through lack of talent. Out of this has developed my *moral* concept of history as opposed to the modern "dynamic" or economic interpretation.

Never, however, have I taken the way of the psychoanalysts, who, it seems to me, overshadow the colourful abundance of life with their systematized doctrines until it becomes a sorry figment indeed. Contradictions are to be found in every human soul, beyond question, and whoever

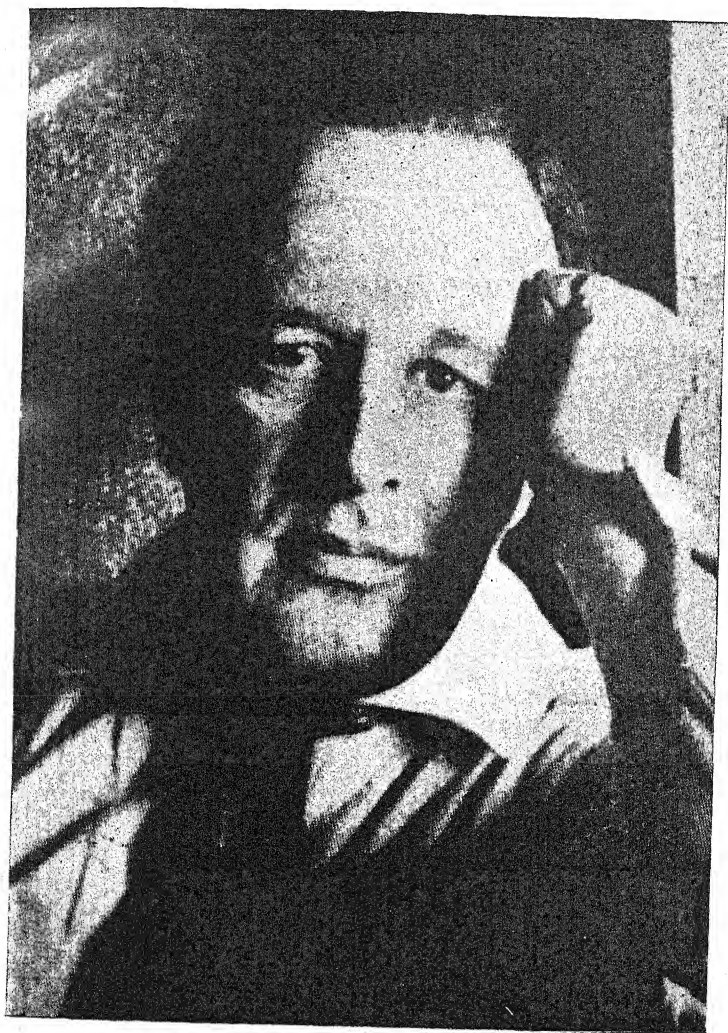
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attempts to unravel them by some abracadabra only destroys their fascinating configurations. That childhood and sex are fundamental experiences of mankind was known and shown by Plutarch, but in no one attribute or stage of development have I found the key to character. Sex and ambition are important motives of action, but the play instinct is just as vital, whether in men of action or in men of reflection.

It is the interplay of motives that is decisive; from this springs the morality of a person.

A man's contribution to human welfare is important in the light of history, the forum of humanity, but before God the greatest is he who has brought his abilities to their highest point, he whose personality has penetrated most deeply the lives of others. Out of this contradiction there has arisen for me a problem which I have been unable to solve completely.

While honouring the man who, through ingenuity, healing, and helping, adds to the happiness of mankind, and while the conquest of cities and countries seems to me to be unimportant for the land of my birth or for any other country known to history, nevertheless, I am most strongly attracted to powerful creative natures, not only in the platonic sense, but creative as men of action are creative, men who know how to enforce their will upon others and so raise themselves a step nearer to divinity. The creative power of conquering heroes is not negated by a thousand deaths for which they may have been responsible upon their way, for such men, as Goethe says, "step beyond morality; they are elemental forces like water and fire." So it is that I am ever more drawn to those who are heroes in the old sense of the word, and that my interest in the saints lessens, although the latter, not the former, contribute to human progress. Even to-day I should have nothing against hero-worship; but where are the heroes?



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I realize, however, that sometimes a patina lends charm to a bronze that would not have pleased us when new.

But neither by this romantic preference for the great adventurers nor by a recognition of the symbolic am I led to approve the adulation of force in our times, which clothes itself in new names and forms. The era contradicts itself. Conquest of lands and people has lost its beauty. The mastery of time and space accomplished by technical advances has made the subjugation of one people by another absurd. Mechanized warfare and conscription have similarly rendered absurd the pathos of classical heroism. I grew up in the land of inborn obedience, but even as a youngster I could not but recognize the madness of modern war. I saw the union of peoples, of all Europe, as a necessity demanded by the interdependence of all upon all, just as the radio, bringing us news of the most distance occurrences, instantaneously unites our minds.

It was the last war that really brought home to me the decadence of our social system. What I saw in Germany of the shallow vanity, arrogance, and self-interest of the ruling classes fostered mistrust of everything supported by the inheritance of rank or money. For me the only hero to emerge from that war was the Unknown Soldier. Yet here, too, arises an undeniable contradiction. An individualist, anarchical by nature, feels himself in opposition to the friend of man who is always working for justice. This contradiction, familiar to Nietzsche, allows me to feel the power and beauty of masterful, highly gifted characters who dominate in the world of men just as there are certain outstanding individuals among animals and plants. But I feel that there are limits to an esthetic view of the world, and so I am dedicated to the destruction of all false privilege based on inheritance or cunning, until society be so completely reconstructed that everyone has the opportunity

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to reach the goal to which he is entitled by talent and character.

For the sake of this reconstruction, this equalization of classes, a portion of personal freedom must, from time to time, be sacrificed, but never at the arbitrary command of a state. With world commerce making neighbours of the chief cities of rival peoples, the epoch of the national state enters its decline. The sacrifice of the life and peace of a people to so-called national honour or greatness is absurd to-day, for no people disputes the honour of another, and "great powers" no longer exist, in the higher sense of the term. Since culture has become accessible to all peoples, a flowing medium miscible with all, the question of what flag waves over a government building is far less important than what is being done in that building toward the equable distribution of goods. One hopes that a world once made free will afford the spirit more room and peace in which to spread its wings.

But I do not perceive in this struggle the essence of the age, nor would I in any sense sacrifice my life to it. Necessary as it is, and much as I agree in principle, yet I know that only the material fortunes of men will be improved as a result of this battle of the classes. The chance which we would give the poor and lowly to learn and to become what they will is bound to raise the average, but it cannot advance the highest achievements, which in all times have had their source in gifted and creative characters without distinction of birth or possession. No more than any one race has any one class a monopoly of the finest exploits of mankind. For among the creative and enlightened figures of history, the great prophets and artists, philosophers and inventors, popes and emperors, there are those who were born slaves, bastards, sons of peasants and the people. The spirit is always autoch-



thonous and not to be brought into being by breeding or by elevation of a class.

And only the spirit matters, for it is that alone which connects us with God. The smallest discovery in nature is of more importance than a shifting of the balance of power in Europe. Biologists, physicians, and engineers, the true builders of our age, compete to outlaw sickness, to master the elements, and to lengthen life, ever striving toward, and in some degree achieving, the very opposite of that effected by the statesmen preparing for war. And even when nothing practical is accomplished, when only new knowledge of the nature of the stars, or of the ocean depths, or of the atom is won, we are approaching God.

Therefore, I do not believe in an ideal state, since the ideal can never be sought in the state. I do not believe in salvation through an idea, because every idea must perish as it succeeds. But I do believe that the imagination and the thirst after knowledge have the power to bring me closer to the wonders of the world as symbols of the God-head.

I recognize God in the logical construction of a crystal no less than in that of a Bach fugue. I see God in the pleading look of a dog as well as in the lovely bosom of a woman. I find him in the iridescent wings of a butterfly, and in the early-morning frost which means its death. He appears to me in the hairy covering of the magnolia bud, and in the hand of the child who plucks it before it can blossom. I see him in the revolution of our times which seeks to wipe out old injustices and in the end achieves a modicum of justice. I see him in the smouldering eyes of a man who vows revenge upon his rival in love, and in the poised hand of the surgeon who removes a bullet from the eye, after the duel. I see him in the master hand of Leonardo, as he fixed an unearthly

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smile upon the lips of his divine creation, and in the caricatures which he made of men's features. I see him in a playful kitten which seeks its play-fellow in the mirror, and in the murderous eyes with which it follows the movements of a robin. I recognize God in the inspiration which he sends me as if in a dream, and in the long labour by which I must carry it out.

Thomas Mann

*Thomas Mann is ranked by many thoughtful critics as the finest of living imaginative writers. There are some rasher spirits who believe he will eventually take his place among the very greatest novelists the race has produced. Artistically he has progressed from the masterly naturalism of "Buddenbrooks" to the rich symbolism of the great Joseph story. Politically he has moved from his original position of detachment to one of absorption in the struggle for true democratic and humanistic values. Self-exiled from his native land, he is looking forward to becoming a citizen of the U.S.A.*

*He was born in 1875, in Lübeck, of a solid bourgeois family. His creative gift matured early: at twenty-five he had published "Buddenbrooks." His middle years were spent mainly in Munich, in an environment well suited to assist his creative impulses. In 1929 he was awarded the Nobel prize for literature. In 1933 he left Germany, voluntarily. His books have since been banned by the Nazis.*

*The following is a list of his major works in translation: "Buddenbrooks," "The Magic Mountain," "Three Essays," "Joseph and His Brothers," ("Joseph and His Brothers," "Young Joseph," "Joseph in Egypt"); "Stories of Three Decades," "Freud, Goethe, Wagner"*

*The essay which follows is translated from the German by Helen Lowe-Porter.*

# Thomas Mann

I FIND IT singularly difficult to formulate, either briefly or in a more extended pronouncement, my philosophical ideas or convictions—shall I say my views, or, even better, my feelings?—about life and the world. The habit of expressing indirectly, through the media of picture and rhythm, my attitude toward the world and the problem of existence, is not conducive to abstract exposition. Summoned to speak, as now, I seem to myself a little like Faust, when Gretchen asks him how he stands about religion.

You certainly do not mean to put me through my catechism, but in practice your inquiry comes to much the same thing. For truly I find it almost easier—in my position—to say how I feel about religion than about philosophy. I do, indeed, disclaim any doctrinaire attitude in spiritual matters. The ease with which some people let the word God fall from their lips—or even more extraordinarily from their pens—is always a great astonishment to me. A certain modesty, even embarrassment, in things of religion is clearly more fitting to me and my kind than any posture of bold self-confidence. It seems that only by indirection can we approach the subject: by the parable, the ethical symbolism wherein, if I may so express myself, the concept becomes secularized, is temporarily divested of its priestly garment and contents itself with the humanly spiritual.

I read lately in a treatise by a learned friend something about the origin and history of the Latin word *religio*. The verb *relegere* or *religare* from which it is thought to derive means

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originally in its profane sense to take care, to pay heed, to bethink oneself. As the opposite of *neglegere* (neglect, *negligere*) it means an attentive, concerned and careful, conscientious, cautious attitude—the opposite, as I said, of all carelessness and negligence. And the word *religio* seems to have retained throughout the Latin age this sense of consciousness, of conscientious scruples. It is thus used, without necessary reference to religious, godly matters, in the very oldest Latin literature.

I was glad to hear all that. Well, I said to myself, if that is being religious, then every artist, simply in his character as artist, may venture to call himself a religious man. For what is more contrary to the artist's very nature than carelessness or neglect? What characterizes more strikingly his moral standards, what is more inherent in his very being than carefulness, than attentiveness, conscientiousness, caution, profound concern—than *care*, altogether and in general? The artist, the workman, is of course the careful human being *par excellence*; the intellectual man is that anyhow, and the artist, using his plastic gift to build a bridge between life and mind, is but a variation on the type—shall we say a peculiarly gratifying and functional freak? Yes, carefulness is the predominant trait of such a man: profound and sensitive attention to the will and the activities of the universal spirit; to change in the garment of the truth; to the just and needful thing, in other words to the will of God, whom the man of mind and spirit must serve, heedless of the hatred he arouses among stupid or frightened people, people obstinately attached by their interests to obsolete or evil phases of the age.

Well, then, the artist, the poet—by virtue of his care not only for his own product but for the Good, the True, and the will of God—he is a religious man. So be it. After all, that was

what Goethe meant, when he extolled the human lot in those loving-kindly words:

*Denkt er ewig sich ins Rechte,  
Ist er ewig schön und gross.*

Again, and in other words: for me and my kind the religious is lodged in the human. Not that my humanism springs from a deification of humanity—verily there is small occasion for that! Who could find the heart, contemplating this crack-brained species of ours, to indulge in optimistic rhetoric, when his words are daily given the lie by the harsh and bitter facts? Daily we see it commit all the crimes in the Decalogue; daily we despair of its future; all too well we understand why the angels in heaven from the day of its creation have turned up their noses at sight of the Creator's incomprehensible partiality for this so doubtful handiwork of his. And yet—to-day more than ever—I feel we must not, however well-founded our doubts, be betrayed into mere cynicism and contempt for the human race. We must not—despite all the evidence of its fantastic vileness—forget its great and honourable traits, revealed in the shape of art, science, the quest for truth, the creation of beauty, the conception of justice. Yes, it is true, we succumb to spiritual death when we show ourselves callous to that great mystery on which we are touching whenever we utter the words “man” and “humanity.”

Spiritual death. The words sound alarmingly religious; they sound deadly serious. And truly the whole question of the human being and what we think about him is put to us to-day with a life-and-death seriousness unknown in times that were not so stern as ours. For everybody, but most particularly for the artist, it is a matter of spiritual life or spiritual death; it is, to use the religious terminology, a matter

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of salvation. I am convinced that that writer is a lost man who betrays the things of the spirit by refusing to face and decide for himself the human problem, put, as it is to-day, in political terms. He will inevitably be stunted. And not alone will his work suffer, his talent decline, until he is incapable of giving life to anything he produces. No, even his earlier work, created before he thus rendered himself culpable, and once good and living, will cease to be so, it will crumble to dust before men's eyes. Such is my belief; I have such cases in mind.

Have I said too much, in saying that the human being is a great mystery? Whence does he come? He springs from nature, from animal nature, and behaves unmistakably after his kind. But in him nature becomes conscious of herself. She seems to have brought him forth not alone to make him lord over his own being—that is only a phrase for something with much deeper meaning. In him she lays herself open to the spiritual; she questions, admires, and judges herself in him, as in a being who is at once herself and a creature of a higher order. To become conscious, that means to acquire a conscience, to know good and evil. And nature, below the human level, does not know them. She is "innocent." In the human being she becomes guilty—that is the "Fall." The human being is nature's fall from a state of innocency; but it is not a decline, it is rather an ascent, in that a state of conscience is higher than a state of innocence. What Christians call "original sin" is more than just a piece of priestcraft devised to keep men under the Church's thumb. It is a profound awareness in man as a spiritual being of his own natural infirmity and proneness to err, and of his rising in spirit above it. Is that disloyalty to nature? Not at all. It is a response to her own deepest desire. For it was to the end of her own spiritualization that she brought man forth.



These are ideas both Christian and humane; and there is much evidence that we shall do well to-day to emphasize the Christian character of the culture of our Western world. I feel the strongest antipathy for the half-educated mob that to-day sets itself up to "conquer Christianity." But equally strong is my belief that the humanity of the future—that new human and universal feeling now in process of birth, drawing life from efforts and experiments of all sorts and kinds and striven after by choice and master spirits of the age—that humanity will not exhaust itself in the spirituality of the Christian faith, in the Christian dualism of soul and body, spirit and life, truth and "the world."

I am convinced that of all our strivings, only those are good and worth while which contribute to the birth of this new human feeling, under whose shelter and sway, after the passing of our present forlorn and leaderless stage, all humanity will live. I am convinced that my own strivings after analysis and synthesis have meaning and value only as they stand in groping, intuitive, tentative relation to this coming birth. In fact, I believe in the coming of a new, a third humanism, distinct, in complexion and fundamental temper, from its predecessors. It will not flatter mankind, looking at it through rose-coloured glasses, for it will have had experiences of which the others knew not. It will have stout-hearted knowledge of man's dark, daemonic, radically "natural" side; united with reverence for his superbibological, spiritual worth. The new humanity will be universal—and it will have the artist's attitude: that is, it will recognize that the immense value and beauty of the human being lie precisely in that he belongs to the two kingdoms, of nature and spirit. It will realize that no romantic conflict or tragic dualism is inherent in the fact; but rather a fruitful and engaging combination of destiny and free

choice. Upon that it will base a love for humanity in which its pessimism and its optimism will cancel each other out.

When I was young, I was infatuated with that pessimistic and romantic conception of the universe which set off against each other life and spirit, sensuality and redemption, and from which art derived some most compelling effects—compelling, and yet, humanly speaking, not quite legitimate, not quite genuine. In short, I was a Wagnerite. But it is very likely in consequence of riper years that my love and my attention have more and more fixed upon a far happier and saner model: the figure of Goethe, that marvellous combination of the daemonic and the urbane in him, which made him the darling of mankind. It was not lightly that I chose—for the hero of that epic which is becoming my lifework—a man “blest with blessing from the heavens above and from the depths beneath.”

Jacob the father pronounced this blessing upon Joseph's head. It was not a wish that he might be blest, but a statement that he was so, and a wish for his happiness. And for me, it is the most compendious possible formulation of my ideal humanity. Wherever, in the realm of mind and personality, I find that ideal manifested, as the union of darkness and light, feeling and mind, the primitive and the civilized, wisdom and the happy heart—in short as the humanized mystery we call man: there lies my profoundest allegiance, therein my heart finds its home. Let me be clear: what I mean is no subtilization of the romantic, no refinement of barbarism. It is nature clarified, it is culture; it is the human being as artist, and art as man's guide on the difficult path toward knowledge of himself.

All love of humanity is bound up with the future; and the same is true of love of art. Art is hope. . . . I do not assert that hope for the future of mankind rests upon her shoulders;

THOMAS MANN

rather that she is the expression of all human hope, the image and pattern of all happily balanced humanity. I like to think—yes, I feel sure—that a future is coming, wherein we shall condemn as black magic, as the brainless, irresponsible product of instinct, all art which is not controlled by the intellect. We shall condemn it in the same degree to which it is exalted in ages weak, like the one we live in, on the human side. Art, indeed, is not all sweetness and light. But neither is she altogether the dark, blind, monstrous brood of the tellurian depths. She is not just "life." The artist of the future will have a clearer, happier vision of his art as "white" magic: as a winged, hermetic, moon-sib intercessor between life and spirit. For all mediation is itself spirit.





Jacques Maritain

*Jacques Maritain is outstanding among modern Catholic philosophers. He is distinguished by the humanity and subtlety of his thought, no less than by the range of his knowledge.*

*Born in 1882, of Protestant family; he studied philosophy at the Sorbonne, became a follower of Henri Bergson, and in 1906, under the influence of Léon Bloy, was converted to Catholicism. His researches have centred in the Angelic Doctor, Thomas Aquinas, but he has also written on themes not deriving from his scholastic studies. He has lectured at the Universities of Toronto and Chicago and is at present professor of Philosophy at the Institut Catholique, Paris.*

*Among his books available in English are: "Art and Scholasticism" (1930); "An Introduction to Philosophy" (1930); "Religion and Culture" (1931); "The Angelic Doctor" (1931); "The Degrees of Knowledge" (1937); and "True Humanism" (1938).*

*The following essay is translated from the French by Fenton Moran.*



JULES ROMAINS



JACQUES MARITAIN



# Jacques Maritain

I WAS BROUGHT up as a child in "liberal Protestantism." Later I made the acquaintance of the different phases of lay thought. In the end the scientist and phenomenist philosophy of my teachers at the Sorbonne made me despair of reason. For a moment I believed I might find complete certitude in the sciences, and Félix Le Dantec thought that my fiancée and I would become disciples of his biological materialism. (The best thing that I owe to my studies at that time is that they brought me into touch, at the School of Sciences, with the woman who, ever since, in all my work, has always been at my side in a perfect and blessed union.) Bergson was the first to fulfill our deep desire for metaphysical truth by giving us back the sense of the absolute.

Before being attracted to St. Thomas Aquinas, the great influences I underwent were those of Charles Péguy, Bergson, and Léon Bloy. A year after meeting Bloy, my wife and I received Catholic baptism, choosing him as our godfather.

It was after my conversion to Catholicism that I made the acquaintance of St. Thomas. After my "passionate pilgrimage" among all the doctrines of modern philosophers, in whom I had discovered nothing but disenchantment and splendid uncertainties, I felt, as it were, an illumination of the reason. My vocation as philosopher became clear to me. "*Woe is me should I not thomistize,*" I wrote in one of my first books. And through thirty years of work and combat I have followed in this path, with a feeling that I could understand

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more completely the gropings, the discoveries, and the travail of modern thought, as I tried to throw upon them more of the light which comes to us from a wisdom which, resisting the fluctuations of time, has been worked out through the centuries.

In order to advance along this way, we are constantly obliged to bring together singularly distant extremes (for no solution of our problems can be found *ready-made* in the legacy of the ancients). We are also obliged to make the difficult separation between the pure substance of those truths, which many "moderns" reject as a mere jumble of the opinions of the past, and all the dross of prejudice, worn-out expressions, and arbitrary constructions, which many "traditionalists" confuse with that which really deserves intellectual veneration.

I have mentioned the different phases through which I passed because they gave me the opportunity of experiencing personally the state of mind of the idealistic freethinker, of the inexperienced convert, and of the Christian who becomes aware, as his faith takes root, of the purifications to which it must be subjected. I was likewise enabled to acquire some experimental idea of what the anti-religious camp and the so-called *orthodox* (*bien pensant*) camp are worth. Neither of them is worth much. To my way of thinking, God trains us, through our disillusionments and mistakes, to understand at last that we must believe only in Him and not in men, which places us in the proper position to marvel at all the good which is in men in spite of everything and all the good which they do in spite of themselves.

This is not the proper place to expound propositions of speculative philosophy. I shall say only that I consider

Thomistic philosophy as a living and up-to-date philosophy, having all the greater power for the conquest of new fields of discovery as its principles are firmer and more organically cemented. When they behold the succession of scientific hypotheses, certain minds are surprised that it should, to-day, be possible to draw inspiration from metaphysical principles recognized by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and rooted in the most ancient intellectual heritage of our kind. To this I reply that the telephone and the radio do not prevent men from still having two arms, two legs, and two lungs, from falling in love and searching for happiness like their far-away ancestors. Moreover, truth recognizes no chronological criteria and the art of the philosopher cannot be confused with that of fashion.

Going still further, it must be explained that progress takes place in the sciences of phenomena, in which the "problem" aspect is very marked, principally by the *substitution* of one theory for another theory which took account of a lesser number of known facts and phenomena; whereas with metaphysics and philosophy, where the "mystery" aspect predominates, progress takes place principally by *deeper penetration*. In addition, the different philosophical systems, however ill-founded they may be, constitute, when taken together, a kind of virtual and fluent philosophy, overlapping contrary formulations and hostile doctrines and supported by the elements of truth they all contain. If, therefore, a body of doctrine exists among men, entirely supported by true principles, it will progressively (and more or less tardily, due to the laziness of its advocates) incorporate in itself and *realize* this virtual philosophy, thereby giving it form and organization. Such is my idea of "progress" in philosophy. The works of Prof. Mortimer J. Adler, especially his book *Art and Prudence*,

are happy proof that a similar conception is appearing in contemporary American philosophy.

If after that I say that the metaphysics which I hold to be well founded in truth can be described as critical realism and as a philosophy of intelligence and of being, or still more precisely of *existing* considered as the act and perfection of all perfections, these formulas will doubtless be of interest only to specialists. A few reflections on the historical significance of modern philosophy will no doubt be more appropriate.

In the Middle Ages philosophy was, in fact, usually treated as an instrument in the service of theology. Culturally, it was not in the state required by its nature. The coming of a philosophical or profane wisdom which had completed its own formation for itself and according to its own finalities, responded, therefore, to a historical necessity. But unfortunately this work was brought about under the emblem of separatism and a sectarian rationalism; Descartes *separated* philosophy from all higher wisdom, from everything in man which comes from above man. I am certain that what the world and civilization have lacked for three centuries has been a philosophy which would have developed its autonomous exigencies in a Christian climate, a wisdom of reason not closed but open to the wisdom of grace. Reason must battle to-day with an irrationalist deification of elemental and instinctive forces, which threatens to ruin the whole of civilization. In this struggle, reason's task is one of integration; understanding that the intelligence is not the enemy of mystery but rather lives by it, it must *re-enter into intelligence* with the irrational world of affectivity and instinct, as with the world of the will, of liberty and of love, as with the supra-rational world of grace and the Divine Life.

The dynamic harmony of the degrees of knowledge will be

made manifest at the same time. From this standpoint, the problem peculiar to the age we are entering will be, so it seems, to reconcile *science* and *wisdom*. The sciences themselves seem to invite the intelligence to this task. We see them being stripped of the traces of materialistic and mechanistic metaphysics which hid their true features. They call for a philosophy of nature, and from the marvellous progress of contemporary physics, the savant can regain a sense of the mystery announced by the atom, as by the universe. A critique of knowledge formed in a truly realist and metaphysical spirit thenceforth has a chance to be heard when it predicates the existence of structures of knowledge specifically and hierarchically distinct (distinct, but not separate) and shows that they correspond to original types of explanation which could not be submitted one for the other.

The Greeks recognized the great truth that contemplation is in itself superior to action. But they at once transformed it into a great error: they believed that humankind exists for the benefit of a few intellectuals. According to their way of thinking, philosophers were a category of specialists living a superhuman life, and ordinary human life, which is civic or political life, existed for their service. For the service of the latter, in turn, there was the subhuman life of labour, that is to say, ultimately, the life of the slave. The lofty truth of the superiority of the contemplative life was thus tied to a contempt for labour and to the evil of slavery.

All this was transfigured by Christianity. Christianity taught men that love is worth more than intelligence. It transformed the notion of contemplation which henceforth did not stop with the intellect but with the love of God, its object. It restored to action its human significance of service to one's

neighbour and rehabilitated labour by showing forth in it, as it were, an import of natural redemption and a natural prefiguration of the communication of charity. It summoned to the contemplation of saints and to perfection, not a few specialists or privileged persons, but all men, who, symmetrically, are all bound by the law of labour. Man is *at once* Homo faber and Homo sapiens, but he is Homo faber before becoming truly in act, and in order to become, Homo sapiens. Thus the Greek idea of the superiority of the contemplative life was preserved by Christianity, but through a transformation and by freeing it from the error by which it had been tainted.

The contemplation of saints completes and consummates a natural aspiration to contemplation which is consubstantial in man and of which the wise men of India and Greece in particular give testimony. In supernatural contemplation, it is through love that the knowledge of divine things becomes experimental and fruitful. For the very reason that it is the work of love in act, it passes also into action by virtue of the very generosity and abundance of love, which is the gift of self. It is then that action issues forth from the superabundance of contemplation, and this is why, far from suppressing action or obstructing it, contemplation gives it life. It is in this sense, which goes back to the essential generosity of the contemplation of love, that with Bergson we must recognize in the superabundance and excess of the gift of self shown by the Christian mystics, a sign of their success in reaching the heroic peaks of human life.

The pursuit of supreme contemplation and the pursuit of supreme liberty are two aspects of the same pursuit. In the order of the spiritual life, man aspires to perfect and absolute freedom, and therefore to a superhuman state. The men of wisdom of all times have given evidence of this. The function

of the law is a function of protection and education of liberty, the function of a pedagogue. At the conclusion of this tutelage, the perfect man is freed from every servitude, even, St. Paul says, from the servitude of the law, because he does spontaneously what the law demands and is one spirit with the Creator.

The pursuit of liberty is still, to my way of thinking, at the bottom of the social and political problem. But here, in the order of temporal life, it is not a divine liberty which is the object of our desires, but rather a liberty proportionate to the state of man and to the natural possibilities of our earthly existence. We must make no mistake about the nature of the object thus pursued. It is not simply the protection of *free will* in each of us, nor is it the *liberty of expansion* of the human persons which make up a people and participate in its virtues. Organized society is intended to develop conditions of life in common which, while insuring first of all advantages and peace to the whole, help each person in a positive manner progressively to conquer this freedom of expansion which consists above all in the flowering of oral and rational life.

So justice and love are the very foundations of the life of society, which must subject to truly human advantages all manner of material advantages, technical progress, and the implements of power, which also form part of society's common good.

I believe that historical conditions and the yet inferior state of development of humanity make it difficult for organized society fully to reach its objective, and that in respect to the possibilities which the Gospel brings us and the demands it makes on us in the social-temporal domain, we are still in a prehistoric age. As we can see to-day in the psychoses of the masses which adore Stalin or Hitler, or dream of exterminating

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certain classes which they consider diabolical, such as "the Reds" or the "Fascists" or "the Jews," human collectivities bear such a burden of animality, easily inclined to morbidity, that it will take centuries still for the human personality to be able really to take on among the masses the breadth of life to which it aspires. We can see, then, that the objective toward which organized society tends by its very nature is to procure the common advantage of the multitude in such a manner that the individual person, not only the one belonging to a privileged class but the members of the whole mass, may truly reach that measure of independence which is proper to civilized life and which is insured alike by the economic guarantees of work and property, political rights, civic virtues, and the cultivation of the mind.

These conceptions belong to wider general views which seem to me most fittingly designated under the term *integral humanism*, and which involve a whole philosophy of modern history. Such a humanism, considering man in the integrality of his natural and his supernatural being and setting no limits *a priori* on the descent of divinity into man, can also be called Humanism of the Incarnation.

In the social-temporal order, it does not call on man to sacrifice himself for any imperialism, be it of the race, of the class, or of the nation. It calls upon him to sacrifice himself to a better life for his brothers and to the concrete good of the community of human persons. Thus it can only be a heroic humanism.

It has often been remarked that middle-class liberalism, which tries to base everything on the individual considered as a little god and on his gracious pleasure, on absolute freedom of property, commerce, and the pleasures of life, must inevitably lead to a despotic paternalism of the state. The reign



of the Greater Number produces an omnipotent state of the ruminant or plutocratic type. Communism may be regarded as a reaction against this individualism. It claims to lead to the absolute release of man who is supposed to become the god of history, but in reality this release, presuming that it were accomplished, would then be that of man taken collectively, not of the human person. Society as an economic community would enslave the whole life of the person, because economic functions would become the essential work of civil society instead of serving the liberty of expansion of the person. We already see in Russia that what is represented as the release of man taken collectively would be the enslavement of all individuals.

As for the anti-communist and anti-individualist reactions of the totalitarian or dictatorial type, it is not in the name of the social community and of the liberty of man considered collectively, but in the name of the sovereign dignity of the state, which is a state of the carnivorous type, or in the name of the spirit of a people, or in the name of a race and blood, that they would turn man over bodily to a social entity in which the person of the chief is the only one to enjoy, properly speaking, the privileges of a human personality. This is why totalitarian states, having need for themselves of the entire devotion of the human person for which they have neither feeling nor respect, inevitably seek to find a principle of human exaltation in myths of external grandeur and in the never-ending struggle for power and prestige. By its very nature this leads to war and the auto-destruction of the civilized community. If there are churchmen who count on dictatorships of this kind to promote the religion of Christ and Christian civilization, they forget that the totalitarian phenomenon is an aberrant religious phenomenon in which a kind of earthly

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mysticism devours every other sort of mysticism and will tolerate no other one beside itself.

Confronted with bourgeois liberalism, communism, and totalitarianism, what we need is a new solution, at once personalistic and communal, which views human society as the organization of liberties. We are thus led to a conception of democracy differing fundamentally from that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and which we might call *pluralist*, because it requires that the state insure the organic liberties of the different spiritual families and the different social bodies assembled within it, beginning with the natural basic community, the society of the family. The tragedy of modern democracies is that, under the appearances of an error—the deification of a fictitious individual closed to all realities from above—they have sought something good, the expansion of the personality open to realities from above and to the common service of justice and friendship. Our personalist democracy is really inconceivable without those super-elevations which nature and temporal civilizations receive, in their own order, from the energies of the Christian leaven.

I am certain that the coming of such a democracy, which presupposes class antagonism overcome, requires that we go beyond capitalism and beyond socialism, which are both tainted by a materialistic conception of life.

I would remark that Christians to-day find themselves confronted, in the social-temporal order, with problems similar to those which their forefathers encountered, in the sphere of the philosophy of nature, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At that time modern physics and astronomy, which were beginning, were bound up with the philosophical systems set up against tradition. The champions of tradition did not know how to make the necessary distinctions. They

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took sides against what was going to become modern science at the same time as against the philosophical errors which, in the beginning, parasitized it. Three centuries have been necessary to clear up this misunderstanding, if it can be said that the world is indeed clear of it. It would be disastrous to-day to revive the same errors in the sphere of practical and social philosophy.

As Pope Pius XI has put it, the great scandal of the nineteenth century is the divorce between the working classes and the Church. In the temporal order, the moral secession of the working masses with regard to the political community is a tragedy of a like nature. The awakening of what the socialist vocabulary calls class consciousness in the working multitudes appears to us as an important step forward if we regard it as the arousing of a consciousness of human dignity, rebuffed and humiliated, and of a consciousness of a vocation. But it has been tied up to an historic calamity in that this awakening of consciousness has been poisoned by the evangel of despair and social warfare which is at the bottom of the Marxian idea of class strife and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the nineteenth century, the blindness of the owning classes thrust the working masses into just this *secessionist* concept which Marx advocated and which calls upon the proletarians of all countries to consider no other common good than that of their own class.

Whoever has pondered these fundamental facts and the history of the labour movement has understood that the temporal and spiritual problem of the *reintegration of the masses* is the central problem of our times. In my opinion, it is only an artificial and illusory solution of this problem to endeavour, as in National-Socialist Germany, to manufacture a race of happy slaves through violence, accompanied by certain

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material improvements which are good in themselves but which are brought about in a spirit of domination, and by a psychotechnic solicitude which is bound to satisfy appetites by putting them to sleep. However difficult, slow, and painful it may be, the reintegration of the proletariat in the national community, to collaborate heart and soul in the work of the community and not to exercise a class dictatorship over it, can take place *really*, that is to say *humanly*, only by a remoulding of the social structures accomplished in a spirit of justice. I am not sufficiently naïve to believe that this reintegration can be brought about without collisions and without sacrifices, on the one hand for the well-being of favoured sons of fortune and on the other for the theories and the destructive instincts of revolutionary fanatics. But I am certain that it requires, above all, a free co-operation on the part of the *élite* of the working classes and the masses who follow their lead, in a better general understanding of historical realities, and a consciousness of the dignity of the human being as worker and citizen, which is not effaced but rather heightened. In the same way, the return of the masses to Christianity will be brought about only through love—and I mean that love which is stronger than death, the fire of the Gospel.

We shall never give up the hope of a new Christendom, of a new temporal order inspired by Christianity. Now, if it is true that the means must correspond to the end and are themselves the end, as it were in the state of formation and preparation, it is then clear that in order to prepare a Christian social order, Christian means are needed; that is to say, true means, just means, means which are animated, even when they are perforce harsh, by a true spirit of love. In two books published in 1930 and 1933,<sup>1</sup> I have already dwelt at length on these

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and Culture; Freedom in the Modern World*; since translated into English and published by Sheed and Ward.

axiomatic truths. Nothing can be graver or more scandalous than to see, as we have seen for some years past in certain countries, the iniquitous and barbarous means employed by men who invoke a Christian order and a Christian civilization. Aldous Huxley, among others, has denounced the madness of wishing to produce good ends by bad means. Henri de Man has explained that in the means the end is already preformed. Will Christians ever understand? It is a truth laid down in the very nature of things that Christendom will be made over by Christian means or will be completely unmade.

The present state of the nations obliges us to record that never have the mind and the spirit been so thoroughly rebuffed in the world. In the end, however, pessimism is always the victim of its own deceit. It disregards the great law which might be called the law of the double energy movement of history. While the wear and tear of time naturally dissipates, and degrades, the things of this world and the energy of history, the creative forces which are characteristic of the spirit and of liberty, and are also their witness, and which normally find their point of application in the effort of the few—destined thereby to sacrifice—constantly revitalize the quality of this energy. Such is the work accomplished in history by the sons of God; such is the work of Christians if they do not give the lie to their name.

This work is not understood at all if it is imagined that it claims to be able to set up a state in the world from which all evil and all injustice would be banished. Naturally, on this ground it would be too easy, in view of the results obtained, stupidly to dismiss Christians as Utopians. What the Christian has to do is to maintain and increase in the world an internal tension and that movement of slow and painful delivery, which

comes from the invisible powers of truth and justice, goodness and love, acting upon the mass in opposition to them. This work cannot be in vain and it cannot but bear fruit.

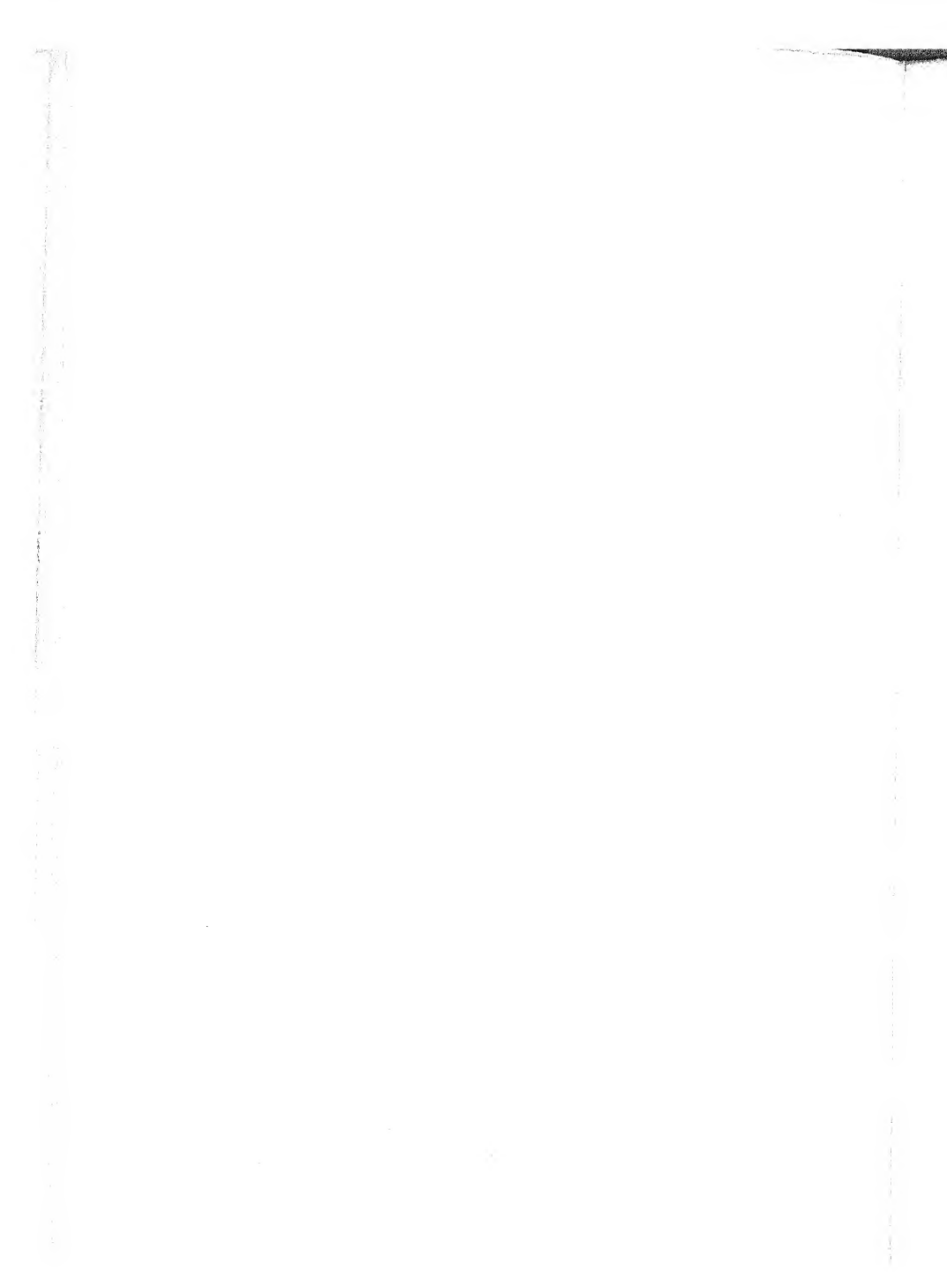
Woe to the world should the Christians turn their back on it, should they fail to do *their job*, which is to heighten here on earth the charge and tension of spirituality; should they listen to those blind leaders of the blind who seek the means to order and to good in things which are in their very nature dissolution and death. We have no illusions about the misery of human nature and the wickedness of the world. But we have no illusions either about the blindness and the harm worked by those pseudo-realists who cultivate and exalt evil to fight against evil and who look upon the Gospel as a decorative myth which could not be taken seriously without wrecking the machinery of the world. They themselves do their part in ruining this unhappy world and driving it to folly and despair.

One of the gravest lessons we receive from the experience of life is that, in the practical behaviour of most of us, all those things which are in themselves good—science, technical progress, culture, etc., the knowledge of moral laws too, and even religious faith itself, faith in the living God (during the civil war in Spain, the inhuman feelings which have swept over both “crusaders” and “reds” have demonstrated what we are saying)—all these things, *without love and good will*, only serve, in fact, to make men more wicked and more unhappy. This is because, without love and charity, man turns into evil the best that is in him.

Once we have understood this, we no longer put our hope here on earth save in that good will of which the Gospel speaks, in that obscure strength of a bit of real goodness which brings forth life and brings it forth without cease in the most hidden recesses of things. Nothing is more destitute, nothing

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is more secret, nothing is nearer to the weakness of childhood. And there is no more fundamental, no more effective wisdom than that simple and tenacious confidence—not in the weapons of force and cleverness and malice, which though they always triumph at the outset, a grain of sand suffices to ruin, but in the resources of personal courage and good will. Through this kind of lightness of heart flows the force of nature and of the Author of nature.







# Jules Romain

*Jules Romain is one of the world's leading literary figures. He has won distinction as poet, dramatist, essayist, medical researcher. Creator of the masterly series "Men of Good Will," he stands with Balzac and Zola as a portraitist of French life. His temperament is marked by tireless energy and curiosity, controlled power of thought, and, at the same time, by a vivid interest in certain superficially non-rational phenomena. He is best known to the English-speaking world by his "Men of Good Will," which will run to twenty-seven volumes in French and of which only part so far appeared in translation. His novel, "Death of a Nobody," is published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Also notable are his trilogy "Psyche," his successful plays "Knock" and "The Dictator," his researches into extra-retinal vision, and the book "The Body's Rapture."*

*Jules Romain was born in 1885 in the village of Saint-Julien Chateuil (Haute-Loire) but passed his childhood and youth in Paris. He received a thorough education, both humanistic and scientific, and, after being graduated from the University of Paris, taught philosophy for ten years.*

*Romain has interested himself in European politics, in science, in travel (he seems to have been everywhere), and in what may be called the field of intellectual co-operation. He is international president of the Federated P.E.N. Clubs.*

*The following essay is translated from the French by Christopher Lazare.*

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TO ASK someone to tell you what he thinks of the principal problems facing man and, so far as possible, of the general nature of things, is to throw him into considerable, even painful, difficulty, should he be a person with a really active and living conception of the mind's function.

The only persons such a question would not embarrass are either those who once and for all have yielded their allegiance to a creed provided for them (and it is not often that such a creed—whether it be a religion or a doctrine—offers a solution for all the problems in their current form), or else those who, after a period of research, have arrested the activity of their minds by freezing it into a system.

As far as I am concerned, I have always tried to avoid either of these easy attitudes, not because of any natural restlessness or taste for change, but because of the significance I attribute to the mind. For me the function of the mind consists in evolving an always more satisfactory and feasible awareness of reality. There is always some aspect of reality for the mind to uncover, some aspect it has not discerned before, or which it has sized up badly. On the other hand, reality itself is changing more or less quickly. When the mind, therefore, is impeded by a system or credo, it is really reduced to losing contact with reality. It becomes resigned to an increasing gap between reality and itself. It might be noted that this process is not without an analogy to madness. In a sense, any system necessarily evinces some of the features of delirium. I might

add, in all fairness, that in the human order, systematic doctrines, through the influence they exercise, have the power to *modify* reality. It is, consequently, not absurd for a thinker, though he does not even *in petto* attribute a definite value to his system, to attempt to enforce it to the extent to which he expects it to alter reality. This belief, it is true, is only justifiable in the case of the thinker who deals in human values. The pure metaphysician who expects his system to alter the cosmos and thus post-nullify itself might be accused of simple lunacy.

What I have just observed concerning the function of the mind is not fundamentally denied by anyone. Who indeed would contest that man's discoveries in all their forms, his awareness of himself and the world, are the result of an endless series of approximations and revisions? Who would suggest that this series might be terminated at any given point?

Of course, we readily grant to the *individual* the right to put a stop to his own intellectual functioning, even before death forcibly intervenes to do it for him. But I have always refused to take advantage of this privilege. I hope to continue to live intellectually as long as I do physically. Consequently, I hope to continue to resolve my ideas on all subjects, constantly bringing them closer to reality, thanks to new reflections and experiences—my own as well as those of others.

Therefore, what I say below represents only conclusions with which I would identify myself if I were obliged to stop thinking to-day. Still, should I, in attempting to formulate them in so few words, deprive them of all subtlety and discrimination? Should I not carefully weigh everything I say? Nothing is more difficult for a human being, even an experienced one, than to take account at a given moment of *everything* he thinks.

It might readily be gathered from what has gone before that I am neither a sceptic nor a pessimist.

I am no sceptic. True, I do not believe the mind capable of reading the absolute and definitive truth on any point; in fact, I believe that, after having neared the truth, it may even swerve from it for a time. But I believe that in the course of history—but only on condition that civilization is not interrupted by catastrophe—truth will be approached more and more closely. This in itself is a kind of optimism. I believe also that the mind's main difficulty does not lie so much in arriving at conclusions true for one particular order of experience. The difficulty lies in discovering a means of co-ordinating conclusions reached while working on different kinds of reality or while reaching out in various directions whose nature changes with each particular epoch.

For example, it is very difficult to reconcile the admittedly precise ideas of modern science in the realm of physical phenomena with the perhaps equally valuable ideas reached in those epochs when man was concerned with spiritual or psychic phenomena, ideas which may have just as much validity to-day for those who live apart from physical methods and devote themselves to research on the spiritual or psychic plane. I certainly do not think that modern science, so often denounced as materialistic, is threatened by a revolution that would destroy its tested results. The only results which may be threatened are those based on over-generalized, premature, or uncertain hypotheses. However, science may one day find itself confronted by results so coherent and conclusive, achieved through methods still roughly described as "psychic," that it will be impossible for it to regard these results, as it now does, as null and void. Many people believe that, from that moment on, things will arrange themselves without difficulty,

what is called "positive" science having nothing to do except peaceably to conserve its actual domain, and, beyond its own frontiers, permitting the development of entirely different knowledge, which to-day it treats as pure superstition or relegates to the "unknowable," abandoning it disdainfully to metaphysics. But things will not be so accommodating. Once the most important results of psychic experimentation are proved—if they need be—and officially recognized as "truths," positive science will be challenged *within its own province*. It will then become necessary for human consciousness, which up to this point has chosen to be unaware of the approaching conflict through fear of the responsibilities involved, to resort to arbitration. That would be a grave crisis, as grave as the crisis caused by the application of scientific discoveries to the industrial technique. It might change the life of humanity itself.

I believe this crisis to be possible, probable, even imminent. That is because I am on the one hand a *rationalist* in the sense that I have entire confidence in the results of reasoning that is correct and of the *a priori* method, also in the sense that I attribute to reason the right to investigate critically all types of experience. But, on the other hand, I believe that experience always has the last word. (This principle—call it Baconian, if you will—is the one that guided me some years ago in my work on extra-retinal vision and my consequent struggle with official scientific authority.) I shall never admit that reason should refuse to consider a fact of experience merely because it is improbable and contrary to the postulates of science to date. All the worse for science to date. Taking into account the new fact, it must simply begin anew its exposition of the nature of things. For example: perhaps some day two or three experiments only, but conducted under absolutely rigorous critical control, will demonstrate that certain persons in a

particular psychic state are able to foresee and describe a future event in a way that excludes all possibility of explanation through coincidence, logical foresight, the realization of some unconscious desire, or suggestion. When this happens I hold that human reason will have to discard very nearly all its current ideas about time, space, causality, the determinism or indeterminism of phenomena, human free will, the nature of the soul and the cosmos, etc. . . .

Briefly, this would be the greatest revolution conceivable. I find it astounding that our present representatives of science and philosophy are satisfied to give but half an ear to those who speak to them of the facts of prevision, or to chat idly about these facts with their friends after dinner. Should they not instead admit that there is not at the present time a single scientific or philosophic question nearly so important, and that, with responsible people affirming the existence of such facts of experiences, their first duty is to proceed to an exceedingly attentive, patient, and impartial study of them? A lesser revolution but none the less a serious one would occur in our ideas and sentiments if life after death, of whatever form and duration, could be proved a fact by scientific investigation instead of being relegated, as it is to-day, to arbitrary faith.

In some respects, I am even a *sur-rationalist*, in the sense that I readily attribute to the soul, in certain individual and privileged cases, the power of discovering reality by direct inspiration. I believe that such inspirations have occurred often enough in the history of the human soul. But—and I emphasize this because it is the source of much confusion—to me the rule seems to be that these profoundly credible illuminations occur time and again amidst a multitude of states of consciousness which may resemble them but which are merely dreams or illusions. The role of reason, in this case, is not

to influence the soul to reject all these states without distinction. but to help it, by confronting them with reality, to recognize those illuminations that are genuine.

I have used the word soul several times. In truth I accord the spiritual and psychic an eminent place in the universe. I am not at all inclined to believe that consciousness and the intellect are superimposed and episodic phenomena in their relationship to the forces and mechanisms of the material world. I do not conceive as yet, and perhaps I never shall, what type of relationship unites matter and spirit in the cosmos. Nor do I know whether the spiritual is co-extensive with the realm of material phenomena, or whether, on the other hand, it occupies a privileged zone. Traditional metaphysics would say that the question lacks meaning, that the spiritual principle has no connection with space. I am not quite so sure. I do not believe that space is by nature any more foreign to the structure of spiritual reality than is time. That is what permits me to attach special importance to the notion of the "psychic continuum." Let me explain what I mean. I do not deny the existence of those concrete, well-defined forms that we may call individual souls. But I am inclined to think they are linked and supported by a vast, diffused spirituality whose limits perhaps coincide with those of the cosmos itself, and to which space, with certain of its restrictions and privileges, is probably not indifferent.

I believe particularly that the facts of *proximity* may hold as much significance for individual "souls" or "psychic entities" as they do for physical bodies. Or even perhaps that proximity between one and another element of the cosmos might precipitate a relationship, psychic in nature, or enhance such a relationship if it already exists. "Proximity augments," as I once wrote; "it feeds on reality." The words were meant



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to convey some idea of the fundamental rapport between what appears to us as matter and what appears to us as spirit.

From such a viewpoint, *groups* take on a notable significance. In my opinion, the general nature of reality might very profitably be examined in the light of this idea of the *group*. We might seek to discover, for example, what there is about elementary things of all sorts that causes us to believe they are possessed of a certain unity when inter-related, and form something greater than themselves. We would realize that the question is very complex and obscure. We might, for example, establish an infinity of intermediary cases between two extremes. One of these extremes might be an arbitrary collection of objects which we group together only by some convention, objects that may not even at all times share a physical proximity or some common relationship. The other extreme might be some such organism as the human body. We would be extremely confused by those intermediary cases where we could not tell whether we were still dealing with a disparate collection of objects or beings, or whether we were being confronted by the beginnings of an organic unity. We would also find that it is not as simple as it seems, to determine which is, and which is not, an *organic bond*; and that in the case of those organisms whose unity is unquestionable, the bond cannot be perceived and manifests itself only in its effects. Then, after careful examination, it will become even more of a problem to decide which of these effects are sufficiently pronounced to warrant on their evidence alone a belief in the existence of such a bond.

Naturally, it is with respect to living creatures that the question becomes most acute. One of my first scientific tasks consisted precisely in seeking to find out how, in the micro-organic world, these ambiguously grouped forms present

themselves, forms which it is difficult to consider simple collections of unrelated entities, but which cannot be classified as unified and self-sufficient organisms.

But it is in the human sphere that the problem takes on breadth and vital interest. The reader may know that I have devoted a great deal of attention to human groups. When *unanimism* is discussed it ordinarily designates a specialized study, largely a literary one, of the life of human groups, and the relationship between the individual and these groups.

I believe, in fact, that the adventure of humanity is essentially an adventure of groups. It is also an adventurer of individuals in conflict with groups or with each other. This conflict is maintained under conditions which bring into constant play the aptitude for forming multiple ties, truly biological associations, as well as the aptitude for warding off the forces of "dispossession," both spiritual and physical, which groups or collectivities of various kinds may exercise over the individual.

Reduced to its simplest form, this statement contains very little originality. The life of society, at whatever level, has always been considered important as a key to the explanation of human action.

Experience, however, has proved that this bare statement takes on a special power of illumination when one endows the idea of the group with its full richness of content, its efficacy, one might almost say its virulence. Especially when one need not be afraid to look for the organic bond elsewhere than in mere metaphors and abstractions.

This patient and painstaking quest for the organic bond down to its weakest manifestation is in brief the essence of *unanimism*: a quest rather than a doctrine.

It will be noted that this quest profits by one very remark-

able circumstance. Man forms part of the groups, the organizations which he seeks to understand. The situation is analogous to that in which he finds himself when he attempts to probe human consciousness. As he himself is "human consciousness," the facts he investigates occur within him, form a part of himself. He manages to grasp many of them, and to grasp them (without detriment to other methods) in a firm and essential way by the direct means of introspection, that is to say by consciousness carried to a high degree of acuteness and subtlety. There is a direct connection of the same kind between man and the groups or communities of which he is part. This connection cannot be questioned even by the most positivist, the most critical minds. They, for instance, admit that as part of society we can, more readily than if we were not part of it, take account of the internal mechanisms of that society and understand the *raison d'être* of the varied behaviour of social man, his customs and manners, the influence exerted on him by group emotions, public institutions, etc.—even if this internal awareness does not reveal everything. But I for one go further. I hold, on the basis of an experience of a special nature, that we are able, with the aid of certain refinements of attention, to grasp the interhuman organic bond, even in its most essential and invisible form, its most fugitive nascent stages. This is, if you will, the counterpart of introspection when it functions most profoundly and permits us to grasp the psychic reality within us.

Now it becomes a question of reaching a psychic reality which is not external to us but which envelopes us. I am far from believing—even if I have appeared to say so at certain times—that this enveloping psychic reality does not exceed the bounds of human groups. But human groups

elaborate and condense it in a fashion, raise it one degree higher, just as the human consciousness condenses and raises to a higher plane some psychic reality which exceeds the limitations of personal identity.

It is not astonishing—and I emphasize this—that I have attributed a prominent part in this investigation to literature in all its forms. Literature has, for the same reasons, played an important part in the investigation of the spirit.

I have been reproached for having “deified” the group. And it is true I have pronounced words on the subject dangerous to the extent that they might provoke a confusion between the order of fact and the order of right, between the real and the desirable. That groups, having achieved a certain degree of organic reality, should be termed by the poet “gods” or, better, “divine animals”—this is merely to express on the lyric or mystic plane a real fact. That fact arises from the disproportion in dimension and power (physical and psychic) between groups and individuals. It implies the change of magnitude occurring when one rises from one plane to the other. But it would obviously be hazardous to draw from this the unqualified conclusion that the group as opposed to the individual is always right, and that the individual’s only attitude should be submission and worship.

In any case, formerly no less than now, I have always insisted that the power of the group over the individual is justified only to the extent to which it finds expression in and by the spontaneity of the individual. I condemned the restrictions imposed upon the individual from without by society and its institutions. As forcibly as I could, I emphasized the contrast between “society,” conceived as a system of restraints and conventions, and “the unanimous life,” con-

ceived as the "free respiration" of human groups and implying the voluntary surrender of the individual to their influence and attractions. I indicated the danger lying in the very idea of the state, with all its germs of juridical formalism and of oppression. I even declared that a certain infusion of "anarchy" is indispensable to avert the demoniacal mechanization of society and salvage "the unanimous life." On the other hand, I have always maintained the extreme importance—for good or evil—of the leader.

The political and social events of the last twenty years have but confirmed these opinions. It has been said, ironically—and hardly to make me feel happy—that the founders of totalitarian governments are to some extent my disciples. My reply was that these governments are merely a burlesque of unanimism, and that they err and err gravely in two important respects. First, they proceed by coercion and are as far as possible from fostering the "free respiration" of the masses. Second, they have a shockingly over-simplified idea of unanimity. They interpret it as an inexorable uniformity of thought, an inflexible and sterile "union." Unanimism postulates the richest possible variety of individual states of consciousness, in a "harmony" made valuable by its richness and density. This harmony is necessary before any glimpse can be given of the birth of those states of consciousness that transcend the individual spirit.

My chief objections to the Soviet commune are based on the same reasons. I regret that constraint, juridical abstractions, the oppressive mechanism of institutions, the state, should so greatly dominate social spontaneity, collective pleasure, diversity of life experience.

I am not blind to the fact that a totalitarian government, such as a dictatorship, may obtain concrete results more

quickly and radically than another. I realize that it is a question of abolishing ancient abuses, of wiping out recalcitrance, of founding a new order. But this short cut is made possible only by violence and destruction; by sacrificing worthy individuals and entire classes; by the imposition upon an entire generation of a restrained and constricted life, the rewards of which are the hypothetical happiness of future generations. It is excellent for each generation to show concern and love for the future. But I am completely opposed to the idea of one generation sacrificing itself to those following it. History has always shown that to be a fool's bargain. There is no reason why such sacrifices might not be repeated indefinitely to the end of time, always for the benefit of some future generation or, in other words, for the benefit of a consuming myth. This Moloch future is a survival of the old ferocious divinities, a survival, in its pathology and inadaptability to reality, of Mesianism. What is more objectionable, it authorizes all the errors of fanaticism while withholding them from the sanction of experience. The present has its rights and duties to itself. The wisest, or the least foolish, eras have been those which thought of themselves first. At the same time, they have worked better for the future than the others, not in bequeathing it systems to be revised, feuds to be settled, ruins to be reconstructed, but in leaving behind a certain apprenticeship to happiness. Let us add that the accomplishments of coercion rarely endure. That succeeding generation whose happiness, by sacrificing your own, you think you have established, is usually in the greatest haste to undo your work.

The fault I now find in ideas I formerly held, a fault I have corrected, is in not having sufficiently emphasized the role of reason in individual or collective life. Without a vigilant and

unimpeded exercise of the reason no lasting progress can be established for humanity, and all evils become possible. Now, reason functions only on the plane of individual consciousness, or among individual consciousnesses which reject all collective emotion, all coercion by the group. It follows that I believe in the permanent value of democratic principles and in fundamental democratic institutions: a government created by assemblies duly elected and self-checked, and thus, by opinions formed as liberally as possible with absolute respect for the rights of the individual. Democratic governments are certainly the only ones which offer unanimous and spiritual life its freest scope, thanks to which the unanimism of action now developing in the masses can be preserved from barbarous deviations and slowly become impregnated with reason.

I do not believe the future of humanity is hopeless, despite the great perils which beset it under our very eyes. But salvation will not come automatically. Even if time is merely an illusion, events still occur as though history were a series of crossroads, and as though at each crossroad, the forceful exertion of will of a man or of several men (or, it may be, the lack of will and abandonment to blind chance) gave events a direction which formerly was merely one possibility among many but which subsequently became irrevocable. I therefore firmly believe in men of will as factors in history, and I attach great importance to whether or not they be men of good will.

I have no fear of mechanization. It is sufficient to know how to take advantage of it, just as it is necessary to know how to use the machines themselves.

I believe, despite unfavourable present indications, that humanity is tending toward the suppression of war; toward the intellectual and economic emancipation, by democratic means, of the masses; toward the diminishing, if not the

## I BELIEVE

abolition, of class distinctions and political frontiers; toward the cure of the psychosis of nationalism; toward an international police and a federal government of the world.

It depends upon us to make this take place as soon as possible, and to prevent great, almost irreparable, misfortunes from occurring in the interim.

As for my ideas on personal conduct, they are either to be found in my remarks above, or are a consequence of them. I limit myself to mentioning the most salient points.

First, I must stress the fact that my views seek to rehabilitate the *art of living* as against those moral compulsions which the moderns have abused. I consider it more important to teach man how to live, than to crush him under the weight of his duties. I believe that one of the primary tasks of education lies in making the individual enjoy society, and that society should subtly affect the individual with a sympathy for it, not a fear of it. The essential chapters of my ethics would be entitled: social agreement, spontaneity, reason, happiness. I would assign an important place to the development of the instincts. I would consider it an important task, on the one hand, to reconcile sexuality with clear conscience in all men, and on the other hand, to raise the level of sexuality so that it might accord with the lyric forms of social and universal feeling.

Finally, I would insist that, with the exception of a small number of very general rules applicable to all men, the formulas and recipes for the art of living must vary in accordance with the condition, vocation, and purpose of each individual.

So far I have not mentioned God, in the usual sense of the word. That is because I find it difficult to say anything certain



or even plausible on the subject. It can at most be suggested that the God of traditional metaphysics, perfect, infinite, creator, and all-powerful ruler of the universe, is highly improbable. The probability continues to decrease as our knowledge of the universe grows and becomes richer. The crude, fortuitous elements of the universe, its intolerable contradictions, the frightful, gratuitous waste inherent in it—to cite only a few shortcomings among many—scarcely make it seem possible that an intelligence has from the beginning been in perfect control of the cosmos in all its aspects. Then, if it is not an intelligence—as intuitive as you wish—it is nothing which could possibly control the universe. Even if we envision a more or less imminent upheaval in the positive sciences due to discoveries made in the “psychic” ones, whatever we know of the latter hardly suggests that their triumph would restore to his throne the God of classical metaphysics. Far from it. Certain minds find satisfaction in the not unseductive hypothesis of a God of considerable power but nevertheless limited in his attributes, means, and competency (in reality this is much closer to the God of primitive Christianity); one who perhaps rules over only one division of the cosmos and must defend himself against evil forces, or against mere chance—even perhaps against his neighbours. (We would have to come to his assistance.) Such a return to humanity’s ancestral notions is not necessarily absurd. Such a God would escape those purely metaphysical concepts impossible of demonstration, and would enter, at least theoretically, the realm of an experimental metaphysic. His weakness would be an anthropomorphism even more accentuated than that of the traditional God.

When unanimism used the word “god” with reference to those collective beings who have arrived at a certain stage

of unified awareness, it was no doubt being a little extreme. But here lay the hub of the matter: the idea of divinity seemed bound up with the phenomenon of a psychism which, though still rudimentary in itself, represented a state of spiritual reality radically different from and superior to our own, not simply in degree but in kind. It was to our consciousness what our consciousness may be to the vital elements of which we are composed. In short, the divine was no longer the human carried to some ultimate point of perfection. It now became another type of reality, manifesting itself in relatively rudimentary forms, vastly removed from the perfection proper to it. What is it then, in reality? On which side is there more reason and shall we be able to recognize it for ourselves some day? It is, as a matter of fact, the old question of the nature of God coming up again, with some new light thrown upon it, but whose solution we will have to approach with more caution than before.

# Bertrand Russell

*Bertrand Russell. 3rd Earl Russell, secured his early reputation through his work as mathematician and symbolic logician. He has developed it as educator, philosopher, and writer of many popular works on science and related subjects. For some years, in collaboration with his second wife, Dora Russell, he maintained a school in Sussex where his advanced educational theories, for which he is renowned with the general public, were put into practice. Born in 1872, he has been lecturer and Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and in 1908 became a Fellow of the Royal Society. Amongst his many successful and famous publications are the following: "The Principles of Mathematics" (1903), "Mysticism and Logic" (1918), "Roads to Freedom" (1918), "Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy" (1919), "An Outline of Philosophy" (1919), "On Education" (1926), "Sceptical Essays" (1928), "Marriage and Morals" (1929), "The Conquest of Happiness" (1930), "Education and the Social Order" (1932), and "Power" (1939), all published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd.*

# Bertrand Russell

MY OUTLOOK on the world is, like other people's, the product partly of circumstance and partly of temperament. In regard to religious belief, those who were concerned with my education did not, perhaps, adopt the best methods for producing an unquestioning acceptance of orthodoxy. My father and mother were free-thinkers, but one of them died when I was two years old and the other when I was three, and I did not know their opinions until I grew up. After my father's death I lived with my grandmother, who was a Scotch Presbyterian but at the age of seventy became converted to Unitarianism. I was taken on alternate Sundays to the parish church (Episcopalian) and to the Presbyterian church, while at home I was instructed in the tenets of the Unitarian faith. I liked the parish church best because there was a comfortable family pew next to the bell rope, and the rope moved up and down all the time the bell was ringing; also because I liked the royal arms which hung on the wall, and the beadle who walked up the steps to the pulpit after the clergyman to close the door upon him at the beginning of the sermon. Moreover, during the service I could study the tables for finding Easter and speculate upon the meaning of Golden Numbers and Sunday Letters and enjoy the pleasure of dividing by ninety, neglecting fractions.

But I was not taught to suppose that everything in the Bible was true, or to believe in miracles and eternal perdition. Darwinism was accepted as a matter of course. I remember a Swiss Protestant tutor, whom I had when I was eleven, saying

to me, "If you are a Darwinian I pity you, for it is impossible to be a Darwinian and a Christian at the same time." I did not at that age believe in the incompatibility, but I was already certain that if I had to choose, I should choose to be a Darwinian. I continued, however, to believe devoutly in the Unitarian faith until the age of fourteen, at which period I became exceedingly religious and consequently anxious to know whether there was any good ground for supposing religion to be true. For the next four years a great part of my time was spent in secret meditation upon this subject; I could not speak to anybody about it for fear of giving pain. I suffered acutely, both from the gradual loss of faith and from the necessity of silence.

The first dogma which I came to disbelieve was that of free will. It seemed to me that all motions of matter were determined by the laws of dynamics and could not therefore be influenced by the human will, even in the instance of matter forming part of a human body, I had never heard of Cartesianism, or, indeed, of any of the great philosophies, but my thoughts ran spontaneously on Cartesian lines. The next dogma which I began to doubt was that of immortality, but I cannot clearly remember what were at that time my reasons for disbelieving in it. I continued to believe in God until the age of eighteen, since the First Cause argument appeared to me irrefutable. At eighteen, however, the reading of Mill's autobiography showed me the fallacy of this argument. I therefore definitely abandoned all the dogmas of Christianity, and to my surprise I found myself much happier than while I had been struggling to retain some sort of theological belief.

Just after arriving at this stage I went to the University, where for the first time in my life I met people to whom I

could speak of matters that interested me. I studied philosophy and under the influence of McTaggart became for a time a Hegelian. This phase lasted about three years and was brought to an end by discussions with G. E. Moore. After leaving Cambridge I spent some years in more or less desultory studies. Two winters in Berlin I devoted mainly to economics. In 1896 I lectured at Johns Hopkins University and Bryn Mawr on non-Euclidean geometry. I spent a good deal of time among art connoisseurs in Florence, while I read Pater and Flaubert and the other gods of the cultured nineties. In the end I settled down in the country with a view to writing a *magnum opus* on the principles of mathematics, which had been my chief ambition ever since the age of eleven.

Indeed, it was at that very early age that one of the decisive experiences of my life occurred. My brother, who was seven years older than I was, undertook to teach me Euclid, and I was overjoyed, for I had been told that Euclid proved things, and I hoped at last to acquire some solid knowledge. I shall never forget my disappointment when I found that Euclid started with axioms. When my brother read the first axiom to me, I said that I saw no reason to admit it; to which he replied that such being the situation we could not go on. Since I was anxious to go on, I admitted it provisionally, but my belief that somewhere in the world solid knowledge was obtainable had received a rude shock.

The desire to discover some really certain knowledge inspired all my work up to the age of thirty-eight. It seemed clear that mathematics had a better claim to be considered knowledge than anything else; therefore it was to the principles of mathematics that I addressed myself. At thirty-eight I felt that I had done all that it lay in my power to do in this field, although I was far from having arrived at any absolute cer-

tainty. Indeed, the net result of my work was to throw doubts upon arithmetic which had never been thrown before. I was and am persuaded that the method I pursued brings one nearer to knowledge than any other that is available, but the knowledge it brings is only probable, and not so precise as it appears to be at first sight.

At this point, therefore, my life was rather sharply cut in two. I did not feel inclined to devote myself any longer to abstractions, where I had done what I could without arriving at the desired goal. My mood was not unlike that of Faust at the moment when Mephistopheles first appears to him, but Mephistopheles appeared to me not in the form of a poodle but in the form of the Great War. After Dr. Whitehead and I had finished *Principia Mathematica*, I remained for about three years uncertain what to do. I was teaching at Cambridge, but I did not feel that I wished to go on doing so forever. From sheer inertia I was still occupied mainly with mathematical logic, but I felt—half unconsciously—the desire for some wholly different kind of work.

Then came the war, and I knew without the faintest shadow of doubt what I had to do. I have never been so whole-hearted or so little troubled with hesitation in any work as in the pacifist work that I did during the war. For the first time I found something to do which involved my whole nature. My previous abstract work had left my human interests unsatisfied, and I had allowed them an occasional outlet by political speaking and writing, more particularly on free trade and votes for women. The aristocratic political tradition of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which I had imbibed in childhood, had made me feel an instinctive responsibility in regard to public affairs. And a strong parental instinct, at that time not satisfied in a personal way, caused me to feel a great in-



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dignation at the spectacle of the young men of Europe being deceived and butchered in order to gratify the evil passions of their elders.

Intellectual integrity made it quite impossible for me to accept the war myths of any of the belligerent nations. Indeed, those intellectuals who accepted them were abdicating their functions for the joy of feeling themselves at one with the herd, or in some instances from mere funk. This appeared to me ignoble. *If the intellectual has any function in society, it is to preserve a cool and unbiassed judgment in the face of all solicitations to passion.* I found, however, that most intellectuals have no belief in the utility of the intellect except in quiet times.

Again, popular feeling during the war, especially in the first months, afforded me a keen though very painful scientific interest. I observed that at first most of those who stayed at home enjoyed the war, which showed me how much hatred and how little human affection exist in human nature educated on our present lines. I saw also how the ordinary virtues, such as thrift, industry, and public spirit, were used to swell the magnitude of the disaster by producing a greater energy in the work of mutual extermination. I feared that European civilization would perish, as indeed it easily might have done if the war had lasted a year longer. The feeling of security that characterized the nineteenth century perished in the war, but I could not cease to believe in the desirability of the ideals that I previously cherished. Among many of the younger generation, despair has produced cynicism, but for my part I have never felt complete despair and have never ceased, therefore, to believe that the road to a better state of affairs is still open to mankind.

All my thinking on political, sociological, and ethical questions during the last fifteen years has sprung from the impulse which came to me during the first days of the war. I soon became convinced that the study of diplomatic origins, though useful, did not go to the bottom of the matter, since popular passions enthusiastically supported governments in all the steps leading up to the war. I have found myself also unable to accept the view that the origins of wars are always economic, for it was obvious that *most of the people who were enthusiastically in favour of the war were going to lose money by it, and the fact that they themselves did not think so showed that their economic thinking was biased, and that the passion causing the bias was the real source of their warlike feeling.* The supposed economic causes of war, except in the case of certain capitalistic enterprises, are in the nature of a rationalization: *people wish to fight, and they therefore persuade themselves that it is to their interest to do so.* The important question, then, is the psychological one—"Why do people wish to fight?" And this leads on from war to a host of other questions concerning impulses to cruelty and oppression in general. *These questions in their turn involve a study of the origins of malevolent passions, and thence of psychoanalysis and the theory of education.*

Gradually, through the investigation of these questions, I have come to a certain philosophy of life, guided always by the desire to *discover some way in which men, with the congenital characteristics which nature has given them, can live together in societies without devoting themselves to making each other miserable.* The keynote of my social philosophy, from a scientific point of view, is the emphasis upon psychology and the practice of judging social institutions by their effects upon human character. During the war all the recognized

virtues of sober citizens were turned to a use which I considered bad. Men abstained from alcohol in order to make shells; they worked long hours in order to destroy the kind of society that makes work worth doing. Venereal disease was thought more regrettable than usual because it interfered with the killing of enemies. All this made me acutely aware of the fact that *rules of conduct, whatever they may be, are not sufficient to produce good results unless the ends sought are good*. Sobriety, thrift, industry, and continence, in so far as they existed during the war, merely increased the orgy of destruction. The money spent on drink, on the other hand, saved men's lives, since it was taken away from the making of high explosives.

Being a pacifist forced one into opposition to the whole purpose of the community and made it very difficult to avoid a completely antinomian attitude of hostility to all recognized moral rules. My attitude, however, is not really one of hostility to moral rules; it is essentially that expressed by Saint Paul in the famous passage on charity. I do not always find myself in agreement with that apostle, but on this point my feeling is exactly the same as his—namely, that *no obedience to moral rules can take the place of love, and that where love is genuine, it will, if combined with intelligence, suffice to generate whatever moral rules are necessary*. The word "love," however, has become somewhat worn with usage and no longer conveys quite the right shade of meaning. One might start at the other end, from a behaviourist analysis, dividing movements into those of approach and those of withdrawal. In some of the humblest regions of the animal kingdom creatures can be divided, for example, into the phototropic and photophobic—that is, those which approach light and those which fly from it.

The same kind of distinction applies throughout the animal kingdom. In the presence of a new stimulus there may be an

impulse of approach or an impulse of retreat. Translated into psychological terms, this may be expressed by saying that there may be an emotion of attraction or an emotion of fear. Both, of course, are necessary for survival, but emotions of fear are very much less necessary for survival in civilized life than they were at earlier stages of human development or among our prehuman ancestors. Before men had adequate weapons, fierce wild beasts must have made life very dangerous, so that men had reason to be as timorous as rabbits are now, and there was an ever-present danger of death by starvation, which has grown enormously less with the creation of modern means of transport.

At the present time the fiercest and most dangerous animal with which human beings have to contend is man, and the dangers arising from purely physical causes have been very rapidly reduced. In the present day, therefore, fear finds little scope except in relation to other human beings, and *fear itself is one of the main reasons why human beings are formidable to each other*. It is a recognized maxim that the best defence is attack; consequently people are continually attacking each other because they expect to be attacked. Our instinctive emotions are those that we have inherited from a much more dangerous world, and contain, therefore, a larger proportion of fear than they should; this fear, since it finds little outlet elsewhere, directs itself against the social environment, producing distrust and hate, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. If we are to profit fully by our new-won mastery over nature, we must acquire a more lordly psychology: instead of the cringing and resentful terror of the slave, we must learn to feel the calm dignity of the master. Reverting to the impulses of approach and withdrawal, this means that impulses of approach need to be encouraged, and those of withdrawal need

to be discouraged. Like everything else, this is a matter of degree. I am not suggesting that people should approach tigers and pythons with friendly feelings; I am only saying that since tradition grew up in a more dangerous world, the present-day occasions for fear and withdrawal are less numerous than tradition would lead us to suppose.

It is the conquest of nature which has made possible a more friendly and co-operative attitude between human beings, and if *rational men co-operated* and used their scientific knowledge to the full, *they could now secure the economic welfare of all*—which was not possible in any earlier period. Life and death competition for the possession of fertile lands was reasonable enough in the past, but it has now become a folly. International government, business organization, and birth control should make the world comfortable for everybody. I do not say that everybody could be as rich as Cræsus, but *everybody could have as much of this world's goods as is necessary for the happiness of sensible people*. With the problem of poverty and destitution eliminated, men could devote themselves to the constructive arts of civilization—to the progress of science, the diminution of disease, the postponement of death, and the liberation of the impulses that make for joy.

Why do such ideas appear Utopian? The reasons lie solely in human psychology—not in the unalterable parts of human nature, but in those which we acquire from tradition, education, and the example of our environment. Take, first, international government. The necessity for this is patent to every person capable of political thought, but nationalistic passions stand in the way. Each nation is proud of its independence; each nation is willing to fight till the last gasp to preserve its freedom. This, of course, is mere anarchy, and it leads to conditions exactly analogous to those in the feudal ages before the

bold, bad barons were forced in the end to submit to the authority of the king. The attitude we have toward foreign nations is one of withdrawal: the foreigner may be all right in his place, but we become filled with alarm at the thought that he may have any say in our affairs. Each state, therefore, insists upon the right of private war. Treaties, arbitration, Kellogg Peace Pacts, and the rest are all very well as gestures, but everybody knows that they will not stand any severe strain. So long as each nation has its own army and navy and air force it will use them when it gets excited, whatever treaties its government may have signed.

There will be no safety in the world until men have applied to the rules between different states the great principle which has produced internal security—namely, that *in any dispute, force must not be employed by either interested party but only by a neutral authority after due investigation according to recognized principles of law*. When all the armed forces of the world are controlled by one world-wide authority, we shall have reached the stage in the relation of states which was reached centuries ago in the relations of individuals. Nothing less than this will suffice.

The basis of international anarchy is *men's proneness to fear and hatred*. This is also the basis of economic disputes; for the love of power, which is at their root, is generally an embodiment of fear. Men desire to be in control because they are afraid that the control of others will be used unjustly to their detriment. The same thing applies in the sphere of sexual morals; the power of husbands over wives and of wives over husbands, which is conferred by the law, is derived from fear of the loss of possession. This motive is the negative emotion of jealousy, not the positive emotion of love. In education the same kind of thing occurs. The positive emotion which should

supply the motive in education is curiosity, but the curiosity of the young is severely repressed in many directions—sexual, theological, and political. Instead of being encouraged in the practice of free inquiry, children are instructed in some brand of orthodoxy, with the result that unfamiliar ideas inspire them with terror rather than with interest. All these bad results spring from a pursuit of security—a pursuit inspired by irrational fears; the fears have become irrational, since in the modern world fearlessness and intelligence, if embodied in social organization, would in themselves suffice to produce security.

The road to Utopia is clear; *it lies partly through politics and partly through changes in the individual. As for politics, far the most important thing is the establishment of an international government*—a measure which I expect to be brought about through the world government of the United States. As for the individual, the problem is to make him less prone to hatred and fear, and this is a matter partly physiological and partly psychological. Much of the hatred in the world springs from bad digestion and inadequate functioning of the glands, which is a result of oppression and thwarting in youth. In a world where the health of the young is adequately cared for and their vital impulses are given the utmost scope compatible with their own health and that of their companions, men and women will grow up more courageous and less malevolent than they are at present.

Given such human beings and an international government, the world might become stable and yet civilized, whereas, with our present psychology and political organization, every increase in scientific knowledge brings the destruction of civilization nearer.

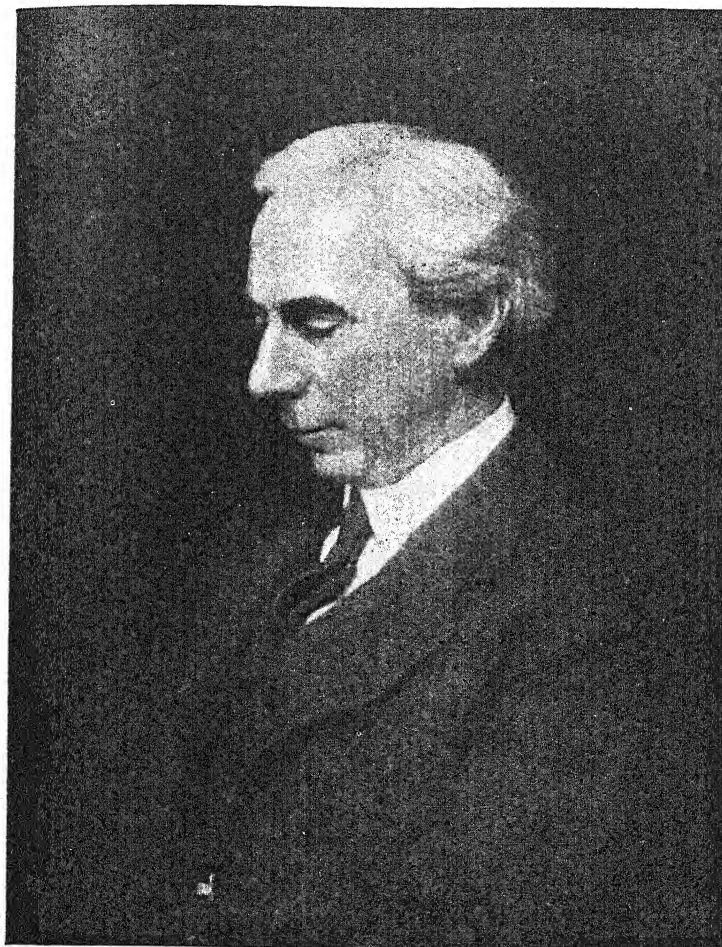
## POSTSCRIPT

NOTHING that has happened in the world since this essay was written has caused me to alter any of my beliefs, but some events have led to a change of emphasis. In ordinary life we do not have to proclaim vigorously that two and two are four, because we do not find it questioned; but if important governments put people to death for asserting it, we might have to devote time to the multiplication table which otherwise might be better employed. So it is at the present time. It had seemed, to my generation, that certain principles were definitely accepted in politics, e.g. that Jews and Christians should have the same social and political rights; that a man should not be deprived of life or liberty except by due process of law; and that there should be freedom of opinion except in so far as some interference might be necessary in time of actual war.

These principles, in whole or part, are now rejected by the Governments of Germany, Italy, Russia, India, and Japan, not to mention many smaller countries. Those who disapprove of their rejection in one case very often approve of it in another. Communists are shocked by the tyranny in Fascist countries, but think it quite right that Stalin should be able to execute his colleagues whenever the humour seizes him. Fascists are horrified by the sufferings of Russian kulaks, but think that Jews deserve no mercy. The world grows more and more fierce, and fewer and fewer people object to atrocities committed by their own party.

In these circumstances, those of us who still believe in tolerance and democracy are told that we are condemning ourselves to futility, since victory must go either to the





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Fascists or to the Communists. I think this point of view quite unhistorical, but in any case I could not accept it.

To begin with the historical argument. For a time, the Western world was divided between the followers of Luther and the followers of Loyola; all governments were on one side or the other, fierce wars were fought, and the few who, like Erasmus, remained neutral might have been thought negligible. But after about a hundred years of slaughter without victory to either side, people got tired of the whole business and just stopped. To us, in retrospect, there seems very little to choose between persecuting Protestants and persecuting Catholics: we should divide the world of the seventeenth century into fanatics and sensible people, putting the opposing fanaticisms together as analogous follies. So, in retrospect, will Communism and Fascism appear. The ultimate victory is never to the fanatic, because he tries to keep men's emotions in a state of tension which the great majority, in the long run, find unbearable. The eighteenth century—the age of reason—was a period of relaxation after the excitements of the wars of religion. So, I doubt not, the modern wars of ideologies will be succeeded by another age of reason, in which, once more, people will not be willing to persecute in the name of beliefs for which there is no evidence.

Fascism and Communism, when analysed psychologically, are seen to be extraordinarily similar. They are both creeds by which ambitious politicians seek to concentrate in their own persons the power that has hitherto been divided between politicians and capitalists. Of course they have their differing ideologies. But an ideology is merely the politician's weapon; it is to him what the rifle is to the soldier. This is still true, psychologically, even if the politician is taken in by his own eloquence. The technique of both parties is the same: first,

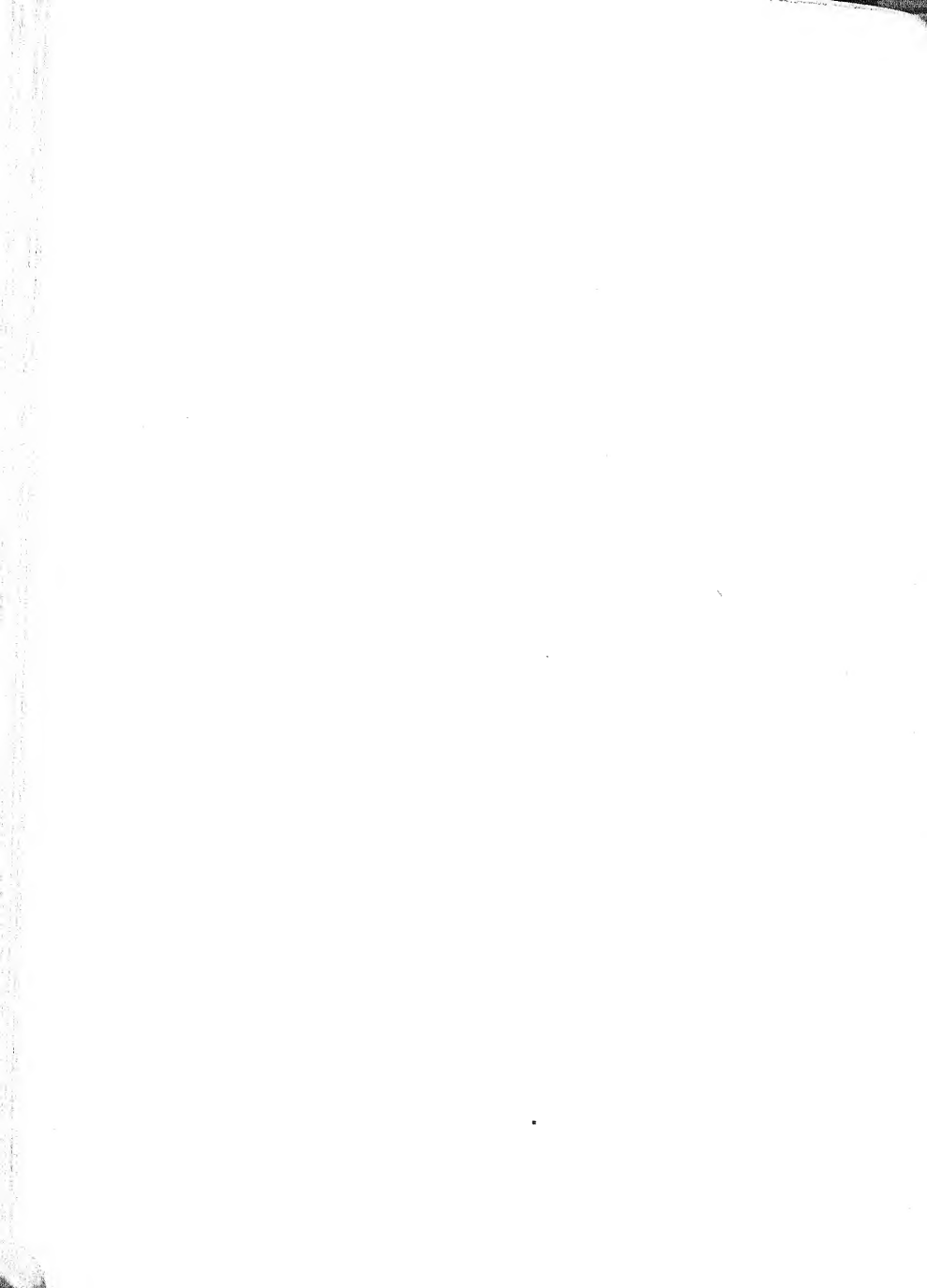
to persuade a minority by an ideology which appeals to hate; then, by some trick, to confine military power to this minority; and finally, to establish a tyranny. The method, so far as the modern world is concerned, was invented by Cromwell.

The defects of the method are obvious. Since it appeals to hate, it involves, internally, cruelty and suppression of every kind of freedom, and externally, a vehement reaction of fear and preparation for war. Owing to its revivalist's technique, its success, like that of analogous religious movements in the past, cannot be more than temporary; before long, enthusiasm gives place to corruption, and zeal degenerates into the activities of spies and informers. The ruler, terrified of assassination and palace revolutions, is the prisoner of his own secret service; everyone else comes to know that the road to success is to denounce relations and friends for imaginary conspiracies. There is nothing new about all this, it may be studied in the pages of Tacitus as well as in recent accounts of Russia.

It is a great misfortune that so many radicals should have persuaded themselves that the millennium is to be reached along such a road, and should have closed their eyes to the similarity of different brands of totalitarian states. The mentality produced by the Great War has encouraged an excessive belief in what can be achieved by violence, without the concurrence of the populations concerned; and at the same time impoverishment has stimulated the desire to find an enemy to whom misfortunes may be attributed. The cure for the crisis due to the Great War is thought to be a still greater war; all the disillusionments of idealists at Versailles and after are forgotten. In this there is no wisdom. It is not by violence and cruelty and despotism that the happiness of mankind is to be secured. In 1914 the world started along a wrong road, which it is still traversing, faster and faster the longer the end of the

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journey remains out of sight. Perhaps the blind alley will have to be followed to the very end, as in the wars of religion, before men discover that it leads nowhere. But in the meantime those who retain the use of reason should not encourage the frantic stampede toward disaster.



John Strachey

*John Strachey has established himself in his books, articles, and lectures as one of the most vigorous of current critics of our society, taking a Socialist point of view, as this contribution indicates. He was born in 1901, son of John St. Loe Strachey and cousin of Lytton Strachey. Educated at Eton and Oxford, he quickly made his entry into English politics, serving as Labour M.P. from 1929 to 1931. In 1931 he resigned from the Parliamentary Labour Party.*

*His most influential books include: "The Coming Struggle for Power" (1932); "The Menace of Fascism" (1933); "The Nature of Capitalist Crisis" (1935); "The Theory and Practice of Socialism" (1936); "What We Are to Do" (1938), and "The Economics of Progress" (1939).*



# John Strachey

**M**Y PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE is simple. I know what I want for myself. I want the opportunity to live a reasonably secure and full life; the opportunity to contribute from whatever capacities I have to the common store and to receive, in return, the benefits of the capacities of others. In a word, I want Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

I presume that other people want this too. I presume this because I do not believe that in these fundamental respects human beings differ very significantly, and secondly because I observe that, however confusedly, men's efforts are directed toward this end. I also note that up till now in human history by far the greater part of mankind has never succeeded in getting anywhere near the attainment of this end. I do not, of course, know what the world would be like if mankind as a whole succeeded in obtaining secure and reasonable conditions of life. Maybe nothing much would come of it. Maybe, as the poet of the late nineteenth-century disillusionment has it:

*The troubles of our proud and angry dust  
Are from eternity, and shall not fail.*

Nobody can prove the contrary; and nobody but an ass believes that the attainment of satisfactory conditions of life would do more than make it possible for men to approach the most intricate and interesting problems of living. But for that very reason it may be, and I for one believe that it would

be, that the attainment of such conditions of life would open up a new epoch of human history which would make our present concerns seem very small beer indeed.

What, pray, is there to do with one's life in this twentieth century of ours except to take part in the struggle to build a world of security and peace? The only practical alternative, for men and women of any vigour, is to try to get money and power for themselves. There is, to be sure, this old ideal of personal advancement, not indeed, from log cabin to White House—that is old stuff—but from slum tenement to director's room. There was a time, no doubt, when a reasonable man could feel not dissatisfied with such a career, for his own personal success in the struggle was, up to say 1914, genuinely bound up, to some extent at any rate, with the development of the community. A man could hardly make a great fortune or build up a financial empire without, if only incidentally, building great railroads or public utilities, or what you will, for his country. But to-day, who can doubt that the road to great personal wealth and power lies, in the representative examples, not so much through building anything as through preventing things from being built; not so much through the provision of more and better supplies of food or clothing, or what you will, to the community as through the cornering or restricting of such supplies as there are; not through the development of the community but through a holdup of the community?

Once that has become apparent, it seems to me that there must be something a bit queer about a man who can feel satisfaction in devoting his life to the struggle for money and power. He must be either so frightened of poverty that he can think about little else, or he must have a slightly pathological love of accumulation. Or again he must be so

frightened of being powerless that he cannot feel safe unless he feels omnipotent—or something of that sort. There are no doubt lots of people with one or other of these kinks; present-day conditions of life tend to breed them. But for more normal people the old success-story ideal must surely be profoundly stale. And what else is there, I repeat? Do you wish to turn your back on the whole world in despair? It is two or three centuries too late for that. The command, "Get thee to a nunnery!" makes no real sense to-day.

The above paragraphs have been intentionally written upon the hypothesis that it is possible for us either to live our own personal lives or to participate in the struggle to better the world. Already, however, for the great majority of the population of the world this is a false hypothesis. The true alternative for the people of the world is not either to live personal, self-regarding lives against a background of more or less tolerable, or at least stable, social conditions, or to take part in the struggle for social improvement. The real alternative is one of successful struggle to change the world for the better, or of the rapid regression of the world to incomparably worse conditions than any we have yet experienced. Americans may not see it quite so clearly in their country as we can in Europe. But here in Britain it is becoming almost impossible to doubt that unless we somehow manage to get together in a conscious effort to make things much better than they have ever been before, things will get intolerably worse.

No doubt it will be upon the great masses of the human race—the 40,000,000 British wage earners and their dependents (out of 47,000,000 inhabitants of Britain), for example, or the worker and peasant masses of Continental Europe, or the wage earners and poorer farmers of America—that this choice

will bear most obviously and inescapably. If they do not manage to put things right, it will be appallingly the worse for them. Far from being allowed to carry on with their own private, individual efforts to better themselves, which, however feeble and however frequently frustrated, did offer them an object in life, they will lose the very possibility of reasonable existence. They will lose their jobs in slump, their liberties in Fascism, and their lives in war. Hence, the struggle to make a decent world is, for this overwhelming majority of humanity not something which they may or may not participate in; it is something which confronts them; it is a battle which they must fight, but which they may either win or lose.

Moreover, if this absence of choice in the matter is true for the working masses already, it is becoming true for members of those upper and middle classes of the community, to which most of the readers of these words will belong. We may have guarded ourselves against the consequences of slump pretty successfully (the British middle class have so far succeeded in this a good deal better than have the middle classes of America, I fancy). We may have thought that, after all, the loss of our liberty to write or say what we think under some kind of Fascist regime, would be, though unpleasant, not really so very important. But what does get us is being faced with the prospect of unending war between the struggling empires. For if we are not killed in this latest war, well then, we shall be killed in the next but one, or in the one after that.

The British upper and middle classes, in particular, are for the first time facing up to this situation as a reality, at the time that this article is being written. As one of them said to me recently, "It cost a million lives to defeat German imperialism last time—now, within twenty-five years, we have

apparently got to do it again. Perhaps we *can* do it again; but what would another victory lead to? Another twenty years breathing space, and then a third world war, or what?"

He had suddenly seen that an unending series of world wars was the logical and inevitable outcome of running the world in the way in which it is run to-day. Or rather, he had seen an unending series of world wars as logical and inevitable in themselves, for he could not even conceive of organizing the world differently to the way in which it is organized to-day. And he did not like the prospect. It is, above all, this prospect of unending imperialist wars which is turning the minds of a quite significant number of the younger members of the upper and middle classes in this country toward the idea of devoting their lives to the reconstruction of society.

There arises in the minds of such members of the middle and upper classes, a very old problem; but it arises in a new form. When I was at the University, the problem used to be put in this way. Those young men who showed a tendency to be interested in "problems" of one kind or another, who showed a tendency toward devoting their lives to some more or less impersonal end, were called "idealists" and were appropriately admired and despised by those undergraduates who were not interested in "problems"—or, rather, were interested in the one great problem of how they were going to get on in the world. Of course, every one instinctively realized (the realization was carried in the very tones in which the word "idealist" was said) that the self-regarding realists and all they stood for would, however regrettably, brush aside the idealists and all they stood for. As long as the issue poses itself that way; as long as it really is to the personal interests of the most vigorous types to take the condition of

the world as given, and make the best of it for themselves, then no other result can be expected. Slowly but surely, however, the condition of the world becomes so intolerable, that the first, the most pressing, the most severely practical, interest of everybody becomes to change it. Once that has happened, the world will certainly be changed; but it will only be changed for the better if the people who do the changing have learned to understand what is wrong, and consequently, how to put it right.

The fact is that once a man gets mixed up in the main contemporary struggle to create a decent sort of world, his own personal interests and the interests of his cause become so interwoven, both in the sense that they can support each other, and in the sense that they can conflict with each other, that it is almost impossible to separate them. What, then, I am asserting is not the super-truism that men have individual personal aims for which they struggle, but the proposition, often denied both in words and deeds, that men entertain impersonal motives which are yet sufficiently strong to make them act.

The trouble is that the people who believe in the possibility of this often go to the other extreme and assert that these "idealistic" motives are entirely impersonal. They assert, for instance, that to wish the general betterment of human life is a wholly impersonal motive. They often term it a religious impulse. Now such an impulse has often been, in America and Britain, and in the last three hundred years especially, closely associated with deep religious conviction. But for my part I am old-fashioned enough to consider religion as indissolubly connected with a belief in the existence of a deity; to consider that religion is essentially theology, not philanthropy. And the impulse to participate in the struggle

for human improvement is independent, as numberless instances indicate, of whether a man believes in the existence of a deity or not.

The simple truth is that the so-called idealistic impulses are by no means impersonal. On the contrary, they are merely an extension of the most personal, the most severely self-regarding, impulses. A man will fight for himself because if he does not he will go under. He will fight for his family, his group, his nation, his class, for the same reason, once he has become convinced, and insofar as he has become convinced, that his own interests have become involved with the self-preservation of his family, group, nation, or class. The gradations between the most crudely self-interested and the most apparently idealistic actions are infinite; the interconnections infinitely subtle.

But this undeniable fact ought not even to suggest to us that we have been wrong in placing immense importance upon the cultivation of what we have called the idealistic motive; in calling, as we have, men good or bad, largely according to whether they acted from narrowly personal, or relatively impersonal, motives. For the extension of a man's emotional involvement, by successive stages, from himself to his family, his clan, his nation, to humanity itself, is the story of progressive evolution itself.

It is because this development is so infinitely precious that by far the greatest, and by far the worst thing, that has happened in the world for the past two decades is the appearance of the armed and organized Nazi heresy. I call it heresy advisedly, for the innermost core of Nazi doctrine is, precisely, a denial that men can identify their interests with those of humanity as a whole. The core of Nazi doctrine is the denial of humanity. And whether we like it or not, it

is a historical fact that the concept of humanity appeared in a religious form; it appeared, above all, in the specific form of the Christian doctrine of the infinite worth of every human soul.

Moreover, and this is very much to the point in connection with the Nazi heresy, the Christian doctrine of the infinite worth of every single human being was the disguised expression of man's revolt against slavery, the basic institution on which the whole ancient world was founded. This doctrine was the dissolving agent—"the un-saying word"—which undermined the institution of slavery, and undermined with it the whole gigantic structures of the empires of antiquity.

Now it is, whether they realize it or not, the object of the Nazi leaders to drive the mass of mankind back to a new form of slavery, as a condition necessary to the continuance of the private ownership of fields, factories, and mines. It is the declared object of Nazi economic policy—and this is the first act of any Fascist government—to withdraw from men their right to sell their power to labour, freely and as they will. The first and decisive step in this withdrawal is to make it a criminal offence for workers to strike. This is clearly the first step in the introduction of compulsory labour; in a word, it is a first and long step in the reintroduction of slavery. Is it not intensely interesting, significant, and ominous that the Nazi philosophers (and do not make any mistake about it—there *are* Nazi philosophers, and important and powerful ones) have found it necessary simultaneously to attack the Christian idea of humanity and the infinite worth of every individual human being? For this was the idea which dissolved the old slavery. This, therefore, is the idea which must be overthrown if the new slavery is to be established.

It will, I am convinced, in the end become clear to every



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sincere Christian that, in spite of their apparently greater regard, not indeed for religion itself, but for the churches as institutions with property rights, the specifically Nazi, and generally Fascist, view of life is incomparably farther from, and more irreconcilable with, the Christian view than is the Marxist or Communist view of life. For the Marxist does, explicitly, accept the ideal of a united humanity as the ultimate object with which the individual must identify himself. The Christian clothes this belief in language and concepts which are so different from those of the Marxist that he may, and indeed almost always does, fail to see that at the bottom they stand for the same thing. Above all, the Christian is shocked by what he has been told of the Marxist doctrine of the class war. Now it is perfectly true that Marxists believe that the 90 to 95 per cent of the population of any community which does the work of that community has to take power out of the hands of that 5 to 10 per cent which lives by virtue of its ownership of the fields, factories, and land of the community, before the ideal of a united humanity can be realized. It is perfectly true that the Marxist believes, as a result of experience, that this 90 to 95 per cent of the population will only be able to achieve power by political struggle.

Now this Marxist view may be right or wrong, good or bad; that is not the point. The point is that the whole object of the class struggle, as conceived by the Marxist, is to achieve a united humanity. It is precisely this ultimate ideal which the Nazis specifically reject. Every Nazi philosopher, like every Nazi politician or statesman, reiterates that there is no ideal beyond that of the nation or race. Their ultimate world view is one of endlessly warring races. It is precisely in order to make such a future possible that the Nazi philosophers, both by writing their own books and, more concretely, by burning

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the books of former philosophers, make war upon any idea which includes that of a united human race. It is thus gravely to underestimate the scope and sweep of the Nazi movement to suppose that it is directed simply against Communist, Marxist, or Socialist thought, or even that it limits itself to attacking humanitarianism and liberalism. On the contrary, it is indispensable for the Nazis to attempt to eradicate every idea, including above all that basic element in Christianity, which tends, in however mystical a manner, toward the ideal of a united humanity. For so long as such ideas can reach men's minds the world cannot be made safe for slavery at home and war abroad.

Well, my philosophy is that this movement must be fought. Every year of the twentieth century which passes makes it more clear that humanity must move down this incomparably dark path if it does not succeed in the struggle to create a new world. For that very reason we now see that the enormous impetus, the overmastering drive, needed to create that new world is coming, not primarily from amiable "idealistic" people who want to make things better (they could never be anything like strong enough to do the job by themselves), but from millions of men who, though they may not see very clearly what they are doing or whither they are going, are determined at any rate not to go down the dark path. We realize that it is fear of, and horror at, the regression of the world to slavery and war which drives men to achieve a far higher basis of freedom and peace than they have ever yet known. It is precisely out of, and by means of, the gigantic defensive struggle against Fascism and war, for which world-wide forces are to-day massing, that the struggle for a new world is being generated.

I am bound to say that the basic problem seems to me almost embarrassingly simple. The problem is so to arrange the life of society that its members can get their livings in peace and security. Until and unless they can do that, there is no chance of their living decent lives. Is that so hard to see? Does one need to subscribe to some special interpretation of history to agree with that conclusion? Is it, for example, so difficult to understand that the citizens of Germany cannot to-day live very decent lives when their community is so arranged that the final object of all their work is the piling up of instruments of slaughter; when they are told that war and its preparation are the be-all and end-all of human life; when everything—material prosperity, truth, reason, science, and religious belief—must be sacrificed to that end? Or again, is it so very difficult to see that that great part of the citizenry of every nation which now, every ten years or so, is suddenly deprived of the opportunity to work or earn, and passes into a period of months or years of semi-starvation without having the slightest possibility of controlling, much less of averting, the catastrophe by anything which they can do—is it very difficult to see that, no matter what moral virtues are preached, people in such a situation will not be able to be very reliant, satisfactory, or hopeful citizens?

Nor, for my part, do I believe that there is any mystery as to why the people of Germany, for instance, have been maddened into the belief that war is the only object of human endeavour, or as to why the people of all nations periodically lose their livelihoods. The reason is that the means of production—the fields, the factories, and the mines, the capital, of their respective countries—have passed out of the possession of the mass of the population and have become the exclusive possession of a small class or group. It is this

extraordinary and unparalleled concentration of the ownership of the means of production in the hands of a small class of persons which is making it impossible for the people to get their livings at all, and for the German people to get them at any other task than armament building.

This is, of course, no place to attempt to prove this statement (the larger part of my written work is devoted to no other purpose than this), but again, is it so difficult to see that this extreme concentration of property in the means of production at one end of the social scale will produce just those monstrous results which we see around us? I do not know of any exact figure on the concentration of capital ownership in the United States of America. But in Great Britain, according to the latest figure—that of Messrs. G. W. Daniels and H. Campion, in their standard work, *The Distribution of the National Capital*—80 per cent of the capital of Great Britain is now owned by 6 per cent of the population. The concentration would not, I think, be quite so extreme in the United States, where there is still a fairly large class of independent farmers owning their own land; but there is no doubt that the American situation is rapidly moving in that direction.

For example, the census of 1930 revealed that four out of five actively employed Americans were wage or salary earners. In a word, four out of five Americans to-day get their living by working for that small group of Americans who own the capital of the country. (But perhaps these four out of five wage-earning Americans themselves own the capital of the country, through diffused shareholding, and thus employ themselves, as it were; but no, according to that authoritative work, *America's Capacity to Consume*, "with the masses of the population, the income derived from investments is negligible." Hence the masses of the American

population certainly do not own the capital of the country, for if they did, they would draw incomes from it.)

Now the fact that the ownership of the capital of every one of the great capitalist communities has got into the hands of a small class of from 5 to 10 per cent of its inhabitants would not matter in itself. It only matters because the ownership of capital inevitably carries with it the receipt of all the really large incomes. The maldistribution of capital necessarily carries with it a maldistribution of income so extreme that the system simply will not work any longer. In the case of America we have figures to show just how far that maldistribution of income has gone. In 1929 (notice the year) the 36,000 richest American families each got an income of over \$75,000 a year. These families, taken together, got ten billion dollars. But there were twelve million American families which had each an income of less than \$1,500 a year. And these twelve million American families, taken together, also got almost exactly ten billion dollars a year. "Thus it appears," write the authors of *America's Capacity to Consume*, "that 0.1 per cent of the families (at the top of the American social scale) receive practically as much as the 42 per cent of families at the bottom of the scale."

That is the kind of inequality in the distribution of income which the private ownership of the capital of the country by a small group of persons inevitably produces. When once income has become as maldistributed as that, the economic system must inevitably begin to break down. For that horrible, familiar situation arises in which it is impossible to sell the final products of industry and so keep the masses of the population in employment. The rich, the 0.1 per cent of families at the top of the social tree, will not buy this final product since they are already gorged with luxuries, while

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the 42 per cent of families at the bottom of the social scale, who taken together get no more than the 0.1 per cent, have no money to buy the final products, however bitterly they need them. And so nobody buys them; they are not sold, and the men and women who made them fall out of work and become poorer still.

There are all sorts of palliatives, many of them very useful, by which this situation can be dealt with. You can take some of the money, by one means or another, which flows into the hands of the 0.1 per cent of families and distribute it, by one means or another, to the 42 per cent of families. That is, I understand, what President Roosevelt, is attempting to do at the moment, and it is well worth doing. But is it not clear that this can be no more than an attempt to deal with the consequences of a fundamentally unsound system? The only real cure is so to alter the system that the initial maldistribution of income does not occur. And you cannot do that so long as between 5 and 10 per cent of the population own the means of production, the capital of the country. The only way to produce a distribution of income sufficient even to make it possible for the population to buy the total product of industry and so keep themselves in employment is, in the long run, to redistribute the means of production themselves, which was the source of income, to the mass of the population. But you cannot distribute big, modern means of production such as railways and power stations by cutting them up and giving little bits of them to individuals. You have got to place them in the collective ownership of the whole population. It will not be until you have done that that you will have made it possible for people to live decent lives. But that is all you have got to do. And that is socialism.

James Thurber

Mr. Thurber, whether he writes or draws, is a first-rate humourist, which means that he is an important writer and an important man, two propositions Mr. Thurber would doubtless violently deny.

At any rate it is impossible to deny that he was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1894, and that he attended its public schools and Ohio State University. It is true, though improbable, that he was a code clerk in the American Embassy in Paris from November 1918 to March 1920. After serving as a newspaperman, a somewhat odd one, on the "Columbus Dispatch," the Paris Edition of "The Chicago Tribune," and the "New York Evening Post," he found his true home on "The New Yorker" in 1927. He has served as an editor, is now a contributor, and spends much of his time planning books and plays and losing the notes he makes for them.

His publications include: "Is Sex Necessary?" with E. B. White (1929); "The Owl in the Attic" (1931); "The Seal in the Bedroom" (1932); "My Life and Hard Times" (1933); "The Middle-Aged Man on the Flying Trapeze" (1935); "Let Your Mind Alone" (1937).





*[Courtesy George Harrap & Co. Ltd.]*

HENDRIK WILLEM VAN LOON



*[Courtesy Hamish Hamilton Ltd.]*

JAMES THURBER

## James Thurber

EVERY MAN is occasionally visited by the suspicion that the planet on which he is riding is not really going anywhere; that the Force which controls its measured eccentricities hasn't got anything special in mind. If he broods upon this sombre theme long enough he gets the doleful idea that the laughing children on a merry-go-round or the thin, fine hands of a lady's watch are revolving more purposefully than he is. These black doubts creep up on a man just before thunderstorms, or at six in the morning when the steam begins to knock solemnly in the pipes, or during his confused wanderings in the forest beyond Euphoria after a long night of drinking.

"Where are we going, if anywhere, and why?" It will do no good to call up *The Times* or consult the *Britannica*. The Answer does not lie in the charts of astronomers or in the equations of mathematicians; it was not indicated by Galileo's swinging lamp or the voices of Joan of Arc; it evaded Socrates and Archimedes and the great men of the Renaissance and it has evaded everybody else from Francis Bacon to John Kieran. The fearful mystery that lies behind all this endless rotation has led Man into curious indulgences and singular practices, among them love, poetry, intoxicants, religion, and philosophy. Philosophy offers the rather cold consolation that perhaps we and our planet do not actually exist; religion presents the contradictory and scarcely more comforting thought that we exist but that we cannot hope to get anywhere until we cease to exist. Alcohol, in attempting to resolve the

contradiction, produces vivid patterns of Truth which vanish like snow in the morning sun and cannot be recalled; the revelations of poetry are as wonderful as a comet in the skies, and as mysterious. Love, which was once believed to contain the Answer, we now know to be nothing more than an inherited behaviour pattern.

Before we can pronounce any judgment on Man's destiny, we must take a look at the dilemma into which he has got himself. We must examine his nature before we can measure his hope of Heaven. For some curious reason Man has always assumed that his is the highest form of life in the universe. There is, of course, nothing at all with which to sustain this view. Man is simply the highest form of life on his own planet. His superiority rests on a thin and chancy basis: he had the trick of articulate speech and out of this, slowly and laboriously, he developed the capacity of abstract reasoning. Abstract reasoning in itself, has not benefited Man so much as instinct has benefited the lower animals. On the contrary, it has moved in the opposite direction. Instinct has been defined as "a tendency to actions which lead to the attainment of some goal natural to the species." In giving up instinct and going in for reasoning, Man has aspired higher than the attainment of natural goals; he has developed ideas and notions; he has monkeyed around with concepts. The life to which he was naturally adapted he has put behind him; in moving into the alien and complicated sphere of Thought and Imagination he has become the least well-adjusted of all the creatures of the earth, and hence the most bewildered. It may be that the finer mysteries of life and death can be comprehended only through pure instinct; the cat, for example, appears to Know (I don't say that he does, but he appears to). Man, on the other hand, is surely farther away from the Answer than any other

animal this side of the ladybug. His mistaken selection of reasoning as an instrument of perception has put him into a fine quandary.

The survival of almost any species of social animal, no matter how low, has been shown to be dependent on Group Co-operation, which is itself a product of instinct. Man's co-operative processes are jumpy, incomplete, and temporary because they are the product of reasoning and are thus divorced from the sanity which informs all natural laws. The lower animals co-operate in the interest of the preservation of their species. Man no longer has the natural, earthy sense which would interest him in the preservation of his species. The co-operation of the lower social animals is constructive, that of man destructive. "Group struggles to the death between animals of the same species, such as occur in human warfare, can hardly be found among non-human animals," says W. C. Allee in his enormously interesting *The Social Life of Animals*.

The animals that depend upon instinct have an inherent knowledge of the laws of economics and of how to apply them; Man with his powers of reason has reduced economics to the level of a farce which is at once funnier and more tragic than *Tobacco Road*. One has but to observe a community of beavers at work in a stream to understand the loss in sagacity, balance, co-operation, competence, and purpose which Man has suffered since he rose up on his hind legs. His grip on the earth and its realities began to lessen in that hour; he could walk, but he had lost the opposability of his hallux, and his feet were no longer prehensile. Two of his parts increased enormously in size: his gluteus maximus and his cerebrum. He began to chatter and he developed Reason. Thought, and Imagination, qualities which would get the smartest group of

rabbits or orioles in the world into inextricable trouble overnight. Man, the aloof animal, has deteriorated in everything except mentality and in that he has done no more than barely hold his own for the past two thousand years. He no longer understands the ways of the lower animals and they no longer understand the ways of Man. Here again it is Man that has suffered the loss.

Next to reasoning, the greatest handicap to the optimum development of Man lies in the fact that his planet is just barely habitable. Its minimum temperatures are too low and its maximum temperatures are too high. Its day is not long enough and its night is too long. The disposition of its water and its earth is distinctly unfortunate (the existence of the Mediterranean Sea in the place where we find it is perhaps the unhappiest accident in the whole firmament). These factors encourage depression, fear, war, and lack of vitality. They describe a planet which is by no means perfectly devised for the nurturing, or for the perpetuation, of a higher intelligence. The effect of all this on Man is everywhere apparent. On his misfit globe he has outlasted the mammoth and the pterodactyl, but he has never got the upper hand of bacteria and the insects. "This is not even the age of Man, however great his superiority in size and intelligence," writes Mr. Allee, "it is literally the age of insects." It is surely not going too far, in view of everything, to venture the opinion that Man is not so high as he thinks he is. It is surely permissible to hazard the guess that somewhere beyond Betelgeuse there may be a race of men whose intelligence makes ours seem like the works of an old-fashioned music box. The Earth, it seems to me, may well be the Siberia, or the Perth Amboy, of the inhabited planets of the Universe.

Now that we have got Man down on his back, so to speak, let us look at the tongue of his intellect and feel the pulse of

his soul. There is a great deal to be said for his intellect, in spite of the fact that it is unquestionably coated. It has produced Genius and out of Genius has come Art, the one achievement of Man which has made the long trip up from all fours seem well-advised. Most of the faint intimations of immortality of which we are occasionally aware would seem to arise out of Art, or the materials of Art. This brings us to God and Heaven, the last stop which this exploration into the known and the unknown will make.

Everybody is supposed to have some opinion as to whether there is life after death. Intelligent persons are expected to formulate "an integrated and consistent attitude toward life or reality"; this is known as "a philosophy" (definition 2c in *Webster's New International Dictionary*). Unfortunately, I have never been able to maintain a consistent attitude toward life or reality, or toward anything else. This may be entirely due to nervousness. At any rate, my attitudes change with the years, sometimes with the hours. Just now I am going through one of those periods when I believe that the black panther and the cedar waxwing have a higher hope of Heaven than Man has. The Dignity of Man and the Divine Destiny of Man are two things which it is at the moment impossible for me to accept with wholehearted enthusiasm. Human Dignity has gleamed only now and then and here and there, in lonely splendour, throughout the ages, a hope of the better men, never an achievement of the majority. That which is only sporadically realized can scarcely be called characteristic. It is impossible to think of it as innate, it could never be defined as normal. Nothing is more depressing than the realization that nobility, courage, mercy, and almost all the other virtues which go to make up the ideal of Human Dignity, are, at their clearest and realest, the outgrowth of Man's inhumanity to Man, the

fruit of his unending interspecific struggle. The pattern is easily traceable, from Christ to Cavell.

In spite of everything, it is perhaps too easy to figure Man as merely an animal of the earth whose cerebrum developed extraordinarily, like the peacock's tail or the giraffe's neck, and to let it go at that. There is always Browning's "plaguey hundredth chance" that the mysterious inner eye which seems to see God, actually does see God; and that God sees it, too. There is always Browning's "grand Perhaps." If it is hard to Believe, it is just as hard, as our poet's Bishop Blougram points out to the cynical Mr. Gigadibs, to "guard our unbelief." You remember: "Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch, a fancy from a flower-bell." and all that sort of thing—and we believe again. And then there's a man with a little moustache, and a man with an umbrella, and all *that* sort of thing, and we are safe once more in our conviction that there can be no God watching over this sorrowful and sinister scene, these menacing and meaningless animals.

We come back, in the end, to all that we can safely feel we know: a monkey man in the Eolithic times, wandering through the jungle, came upon a jewel and stuck it into his head. Since that day his descendants have given off light, sometimes a magic and blinding light. The question whether the jewel was carelessly flung off from a whirling star or carefully planned and placed by a supernatural hand has engaged the interest of mankind for a million years. The question will go on and on: is this light a proof of God or is it no more remarkable than the plumage of a bird of paradise?

"Come, come, it's best believing, if we can," says the jovial Sylvester Blougram, over his wine. "Why not," he asks, "'the Way, the Truth, the Life'?" Why not, indeed? It is all right with me, I say over my own wine. But what is all this



JAMES THURBER

fear of, and opposition to, Oblivion? What is the matter with the soft Darkness, the Dreamless Sleep? "Well, folks," the cheery guard may say, as the train rushes silently into a warm, dark tunnel and stops, "Here we are at good old Oblivion! Everybody out!" Come, come, what is the matter with that? I ask—over my scotch and soda.



Hendrik Willem van  
Loon

Hendrik Willem van Loon has distinguished himself in so many fields that it is not easy to summarize his achievements. One might perhaps say that he is carrying on for our time the great tradition of enlightenment called to mind by such names as Voltaire and Diderot. He unites, both in his writing and his social intercourse, enormous erudition, unfailing sturdy common sense, and refreshing humour.

Born in Rotterdam in 1882, he was educated at private schools in Holland, and at the age of twenty-one went to the United States. It has since been his country. He studied at Cornell, Harvard, and Munich; worked as a foreign correspondent both before and during the World War; taught history and art in various universities, particularly Cornell and Antioch College. The tremendous success of "The Story of Mankind" determined his future career, which has been that of a writer, varied by work on the lecture platform and before the microphone. There are to-day ninety-six editions of his books in twenty-one foreign languages, probably some sort of record. The major ones include: "The Fall of the Dutch Republic" (1913); "The Rise of the Dutch Kingdom" (1915); "Ancient Man" (1920); "The Story of Mankind" (1921); "The Story of the Bible" (1923); "R.v.R.," a magnificent biographical novel about Rembrandt (1930); "Van Loon's Geography" (1932); "The Arts" (1937). Mr. Van Loon, who started life as a musician, has recently returned to his earliest avocation and has illustrated a number of song books—the most ambitious of which is "The Last of the Troubadours: The Life and Times and Music of Carl Michael Bellman."

He prefers to call the following essay "The Laughing Philosophers" and adds that it is a chapter from his "unpublished autobiography."

# Hendrik Willem van Loon

FOR A GREAT many years (and by a great many people) I had been asked to give some sort of account of what were supposed to be "my religious beliefs," and whether I had any "religion" at all. And invariably I had most carefully evaded the issue. Not because I did not have any "religious convictions," but because I had very little "religion" (in the accepted sense of the word) and furthermore, an instinct, born out of the necessities of living for a great many years in a country filled with all sorts of uncompromising soul searchers, had taught me at a very early age to beware of those citizens who went around with blueprints of The Truth in their pockets.

I am all for truth. But The Truth, in the Pauline sense of the word, is as little to my liking as cyanide of potassium. For not only is it apt to be equally fatal, but, unlike cyanide of potassium, there are no legal restrictions upon its sale and distribution. Indeed, it is given away for nothing at all to even the meekest of applicants. It may be true that the meek will find special favour in the eyes of Providence, as the Good Book tells us, but in that case, Providence and I happen to disagree, as we do in a good many other respects.

I have lived under almost every form of government, from the totalitarian states of Italy and Russia on the one side to the democracies of the West on the other. But the one thing I have come to fear most of all is the terrible tyranny of the



meek! Compared to the Reign of Terror as not infrequently established by the humble folk, the absolutism of an Adolf Hitler or a Stalin becomes a pale form of enlightened despotism. Hence my reluctance to give myself away! The parties of the second part would never have understood a word of what I said. But they would at once have observed that a few commas in my arguments were missing and their mote-searching eyes would have detected all sorts of strange grammatical irregularities in my text. After that, I would have become anathema in the sight of the Truly Righteous and they would have set out to make my life as miserable as possible. I had not the slightest doubt about their ability to do so and to do so most successfully. One Socrates is enough for a good many thousand years. And therefore I followed the example of my fellow townsman, the learned, and worthy Dr. Desiderius Erasmus. I merely told the curious ones a few funny stories and kept them guessing.

In the end, there is always a road that leads through even the most difficult of territories. I have most carefully stuck to it until now at last I have reached that pleasant spot from which one has a delightful and most restful view of the cemetery. At fifty-seven, a great many things no longer seem to matter as much as they did at twenty-seven or thirty-seven, and so to-day there is no longer any need for secrecy. I therefore shall include a chapter I had never intended to write and I shall try to answer the question: "What do I think of the world around me as related to the problem of Eternity?" or words to that effect.

But there is another reason why I feel compelled to give some sort of account of my own beliefs and disbeliefs. This is the year of Disgrace, 1939. On all sides I am surrounded by

people who are in utter despair. The events of the last twenty years have completely destroyed their faith in the ultimate victory of right over might. Whatever spiritual baggage they had carried with them when they left the parental home and struck out for themselves had either been lost or stolen or blown sky-high by an enemy bomb. Even their iron rations upon which they depended in case of an emergency (and which consisted of some sort of belief in an Almighty God, who, in spite of everything, meant well by his children and who ultimately would come to their rescue), these too were found to have been spoiled by that poisonous gas of hate with which our poor planet has been so copiously drenched by the prophets of the new gospel of violence, and they had to be thrown away as completely useless. Love, the very foundation of the creed to which most of them had been exposed during the days of their earliest childhood, had become a byword of contempt, a product of that maudlin weakness for which there was no longer room in the bright lexicon of youth and which had been replaced by a more manly ideal of brute force and arrogant self-assertion.

These poor, forlorn pilgrims could of course have availed themselves of one of the many substitutes which were being offered for sale (and on very easy terms) by the quacksalvers, charlatans, and mountebanks who are always to be found in the wake of a great disaster. But somehow or other, a remaining sense of decency bade them keep away from these doubtful nostrums which, even in the labels on the packages, betrayed their highly spurious origin. What made these unhappy people suspect that I might have something to offer which they needed is more than I could tell you. But every one of my books and articles and radio speeches is invariably followed by a small avalanche of letters from complete strangers who write



## I BELIEVE

me: "Last night (or in your most recent book) you made us hope that now at last you were going to lift the curtain upon your own beliefs just high enough to let us see what you are trying to hide. For we know, all along, that you are hiding something. We suspect that you believe certain things which might be of tremendous benefit to all of us if only you would let us share them with you. So won't you please—please—play fair with your audience just for once and tell us what is really in your mind. It is not right to keep us in the dark! We are all of us so completely at sea! If you have any sort of compass that can in any way show us the road to safety, then, for heaven's sake, show it to us, share it with us, and don't keep it for yourself!"

Now I have long since given up any desire to pinch-hit for the great Jehovah. Neither do I feel that my little compass can ever be of very much use to anyone but myself. But if my unknown friends think that it may be of some benefit to them, very well—I will add this special chapter (which I had never expected to write) and I will give them a fairly accurate description of the compass and the charts by which I try to steer my own little craft. I warn them, however, that should they suffer shipwreck, it will be their own fault and not mine!

For all matters pertaining to spiritual navigation are of a highly tricky nature and everything depends, in the last analysis, upon the man on the bridge who has to handle these delicate instruments. Wherefore, if my own particular compass (which is completely satisfactory for all my own purposes) should cause someone else to suffer shipwreck and to see his ship dashed to pieces on the uncompromising rocks of despair, let him not blame me for his disaster, for I have told him to beware.

HENDRIK WILLEM VAN LOON

And now, without further ado, here is that chapter for which so many people have asked.

Since all of us are the immediate and inevitable product of our earliest surroundings, I ought to repeat a few of the things which I have already told my readers in those previous chapters which dealt with my childhood days.

I was born in a country which, with all its manifold faults and shortcomings, had yet somehow managed to associate itself rather closely with the ideal of tolerance and religious liberty. I do not claim that the masses of my Dutch neighbours were in any way superior in the breadth of their point of view to the rest of Europe. They were the direct descendants of that race of rock-ribbed Calvinists who, by sheer force of their convictions, had upset the mightiest totalitarian state of all times, the Church of Rome. And they still considered themselves soldiers of that army of the "elect" which under the banner of John Calvin had never known when it was defeated, because it had invariably preferred death to surrender—and dead soldiers are no longer conscious of anything, least of all of the way in which they met their end. Even to-day, when I have very little reason to love those stern-faced Ironsides, I feel compelled to admire their indomitable courage. Like all liberals, I feel a profound debt of gratitude towards those men and women who were hanged, burned, quartered, and tortured in every possible manner, but who never for a moment hesitated or recanted and who gloriously departed this life chanting their hymns of defiance until the smoke of their funeral pyres choked them into insensibility.

But alas! that which had been a living faith in the days when our country had resembled a mighty fortress in a constant state of siege—it had become a mere hollow shell of its former self, once the foe had been forced to retreat before the muddy

waters of the North Sea. And that same garrison which three hundred years before had so bravely saved the lives of all the inhabitants had degenerated into a common nuisance, a small group of professional busybodies, everlasting berating its less bigoted neighbours in a strange tongue which no longer made any sense (the language of the old Zion) and bitterly persecuting the most harmless of citizens if they happened to prefer the God of Love of the New Testament to the wrathful Jehovah revealed by that other Jewish chronicle, which for sheer savagery and ferocity stands unsurpassed in the annals of religious revelations as they are known to me—and I have made a pretty careful examination of that sort of literature.

Of course, as I have just said, the old, irrepressible energy was still there, but since it could find no normal outlets, it got dammed up like a river filled with ice. It had become a constant menace to the safety of the country. No one could foretell when or where it would break its bonds, though everyone was only too familiar with the damage it could do upon such occasions. As a result, we were never quite able to forget its presence, although we ourselves (that is to say, I and my own family) lived within the comparative safety of those towers of reason which had been originally built by the ancient Greeks and which more recently had been completely reconstructed according to the plans and specifications of the great French philosophers of the eighteenth century.

Such spiritual shelters were of course only to be found in the larger cities. Fortunately, I was born in Rotterdam and I did not come in actual contact with the religious Reign of Terror of our small towns until much later in life. And when that happened I had accumulated enough inner resistance not to let myself be worn down or exhausted by the everlasting bickering, wrangling, haranguing, disputing, quarrelling, and

fighting of those incredible and preposterous burghers who had been born three hundred years too late and who would have liked nothing quite as much as martyrdom at the hands of some contemporary Torquemada, "bearing witness to the Truth until the very end."

My childhood days (as I have explained in the previous chapters) had not been very happy, but the misery of those years was at least not caused by any serious inner conflicts, for, as far as I can remember, there was not a single member of my entire family who had not completely and definitely broken with every form of established religion. We were a long-lived race and I knew all my grandparents and all my uncles and aunts. None of them ever went to church. None of them had been married in church. They dozed off peacefully into their last sleep without any benefit of clergy. I am under the impression (I think my sister told me so) that I was actually baptized by a Lutheran minister. But that was due to the personal friendship which existed between my parents and the leading Lutheran dominie of that day, who also happened to be a man of education and a great liberal. In asking him to baptize me, my father and mother wanted to be polite but had no thought of insuring me against the fires of hell. Indeed, it was not until after my eleventh birthday, when the uncertain temper of my father made it impossible for me to remain any longer at home and I was sent to a dreadful boarding school (my people did not know until years later how bad it had been), that I came into any direct contact with the Deity as he had been revealed unto my ancestors.

For statistical purposes, I may here add that in the course of many years I have been exposed to nearly every one of the more important forms of faith. The one exception is Confucianism, with which I have only a paper acquaintance, as I have

never been in China. But for the rest, I know them all from personal contact.

For four years I lived in the home of a local Protestant minister. For three years I attended a school run on a rigid basis of orthodox Calvinism. At another school I learned to recite the correct answers according to the Heidelberg catechism. At still another school (we were forever moving) we attended the French Huguenot church and our religious instruction too was given in French. I lived for five years in Bavaria, which before the days of the Nazis was a centre of a completely medieval form of Catholicism. I was a student at the University of Munich when several of its professors were deprived of their office on account of their "dangerous modernistic tendencies." I spent a whole year in the old Russia (of evil but magnificent memory) and, loving the music and the theatrical setting of the church services under the Romanovs, I learned a good deal about that interesting if preposterous survival of the days of the Middle Ages (Byzantine Middle Ages at that!).

Next I had a year in Poland, when the persecution of the Roman Catholics by the Greek Catholics had forced the Pole to take their own Catholicism with a seriousness I had never experienced elsewhere, not even in Bavaria. I am not entirely unfamiliar with the doctrines of the Moslems, having had an opportunity to study the teachings of Mohammed, both in theory and in practice, in a great many parts of the world. I have been fortunate (or unfortunate) enough to observe the Hindu in his native lair and to see with mine own eyes to what incredible degree of foul perversion man can descend while inspired by what is sometimes rather erroneously called his "religion."

On the other hand, it has been my privilege to wander

through the pleasant lands where the gentle Buddha had left behind evidences of his actual or spiritual presence. And I have watched the out-and-out heathen, the worshippers of sticks and stones, while going about their strange business of placating the evil spirits and doing this in a way which reminded me rather painfully of some of my Christian neighbours. And, of course, a thorough training in the classics has nicely familiarized me with the beliefs of the ancients, insofar as a person of one era can ever hope to live himself into the minds of a people who belonged to a different age.

That is a fairly formidable list, but I regret to say that the sum total of all these experiences was exactly nothing at all, as regards making me a convert. They merely produced a complete indifference and profound boredom. They made me wonder that people, supposedly created after God's image, could actually make their lives so hopelessly unhappy and so immensely complicated and often quite so repulsive in the name of something which was supposed to be their highest spiritual aspiration. Here and there (and very occasionally) I came across a man or woman who, in spite of being a convinced follower of some definite creed, had nevertheless managed to maintain a spirit of tolerance and good will toward his fellow man. Now and then I have also met a priest (most of these belonged to the Church of Rome) who was cheerful and kind and ready to make certain allowances for the weaknesses of his less fortunate neighbours, who perhaps did not share his own views. I also remember at least two missionaries who did not insult the Almighty by speaking in a contemptuous fashion of this utterly lovely planet which has so generously been bestowed upon us as our temporary place of abode and which is capable of so much beauty and joy that we could establish our paradise right here on this earth, if we

only had the courage of our own convictions and seriously decided to do something about it.

That, I fear me, was rather a lengthy sentence but I hope that I have made myself entirely clear. I believe in a most complete form of liberty of thought for every man, woman, and child. Like my good master, Baruch de Spinoza, I have most consciously endeavoured never to say or do anything that could deprive one of my fellow travellers along the path of life of the faith upon which he had based his own expectations of salvation. Indeed, to the best of my somewhat limited abilities within the realm of the spirit, I have given myself great trouble to strengthen these good people in those convictions which seemed best suited to their own spiritual needs. For I humbly confess that since it will never be given unto any of us mere mortals to attain more than a vague approximation of the ultimate Truth, I have no way of proving that the others are wrong and that I myself am right, or *vice versa*. But for myself I have long since come to the conclusion that none of the so-called revealed religions will ever give me the slightest satisfaction. I was therefore obliged to evolve some sort of workable creed out of my own inner consciousness. I am profoundly grateful to say that I have succeeded in doing this as far as my own needs are concerned. But I hasten to repeat (what I said earlier in this chapter) that I do not advise any other person to follow my example. For these things are so completely personal and they are so delicately balanced in the soul of every individual that others might perish miserably if they tried to live according to those same tenets which (until now—touch wood!) have enabled me to maintain a positive attitude toward all the problems of existence and which, after some pretty ghastly blows of fate (for I have had my share) still make it possible for me to keep on smiling

and to say quite honestly, "In spite of everything, life is good."

Have I been able to do all this out and of and by myself? Of course not. I owe this blessing to a strangely assorted company of men who, in the truest sense of the word, have been my teachers and whose humble disciple I gratefully confess myself to be, now and evermore, amen. Do you want to know who they are? Very well, I will tell you. They are that small band of human benefactors whom I would like to group together as the Companionship of the Laughing Philosophers.

And now of course you would like to hear whom I count among that blessed fellowship of my private saints. That too I will gladly tell you, although you must be prepared for some quite unexpected visitors.

In order to qualify as a member in the great and glorious Companionship of the Laughing Philosophers, my candidates must come up to certain very definite standards of thought and behaviour. First of all, they must be completely human in their attitude toward the human race. And they must not put the cart before the horse. They should not start out with a race of supermen endowed with all the virtues and perfections of angels and thereupon bewail the sad downfall of these erstwhile dwellers in paradise and hold them up to public scorn and contempt. On the contrary, they should wholeheartedly accept the unflattering truth about our very modest origin, when we were but little removed from the apes, and they should feel a profound admiration for a creature which, in spite of its lowly origin, its utter physical helplessness, and its many moral handicaps, has achieved as much as it has done in really a remarkably short space of time.



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This latter attitude makes for a much greater degree of humility than the former and it is a constant incentive to do better and better and to feel that it is up to us ourselves to look after our own fate and not leave it conveniently to some outside force.

My Laughing Philosophers must also confess that before the Unsolvable Riddle of Existence, it behoves all of us to express our complete and everlasting ignorance. They must have the courage to say, "We do not know the final answer, but we are grateful for our ignorance. For if we had everything down, black on white, life would no longer be the glorious adventure it is to-day and we could no longer avail ourselves of the greatest gift the good Lord has bestowed upon us—our freedom of will."

They should, of course, be gentlemen in the true sense of the word and as such should be able without any reservation to subscribe to the oath of Hippocrates or to the solemn promise made by those young men who were about to be admitted to an early medieval order of knighthood.

I realize that there are a great many doctors who were never in the least affected by the admonitions of old Hippocrates, just as there were a great many knights who lived despicable lives and who broke every one of those commandments they had sworn to uphold and defend. That, however, does not in the least change the fact that those two documents (the oath of Hippocrates and the knightly vows of the thirteenth century) are in my estimation to be ranked much higher than the taboos and interdictions of the Old Testament, for the latter dealt with things no decent person would ever dream of doing anyway. Furthermore, I am firmly convinced that in each one of us there dwells that "still, small voice of conscience" upon which Socrates (one of the best beloved of my Laughing

Philosophers) based his conceptions of the good life. And if from this the reader should draw the conclusion that I greatly prefer Socrates to Moses, he would have guessed right the first time. I have never been an admirer of either the tyrant or the dictator; and Moses in his personal aspirations and his public fulminations was much too much like Adolf Hitler or Benito Mussolini to be admitted to my private Pantheon of those who were true prophets.

This leads me to still another question which no man of this Western world has been able to escape these last two thousand years: "What think you of the Christ?"

Fortunately, I can give you a completely straightforward answer. I think everything of Him. I unqualifiedly accept Him as one of the greatest of my gay philosophers. But I have always experienced great difficulties in getting at Him because His figure was completely obscured by the dark shadow of that Paul of Tarsus who in his Pharisaic self-righteousness and arrogance had undertaken to explain Him to the rest of the world as he thought He ought to be explained. The simple, lovable carpenter of Nazareth, so beautifully and sublimely unconscious of the practical world around Him, so bravely fighting His lonely battle against those forces of malice and evil and greed which turn our lovely planet into a perpetual vale of tears—yes, He is a teacher whom I would most happily follow unto the ends of the earth. But not if Paul the tent-maker has to be one of our companions. For that brash individual would forever be pushing his unwelcome self between us, and instead of letting me listen to the Master, he would volunteer to explain what the Master really intended to say (even before He had said it) until in despair I would either have pushed him aside (in which case he would have

called me a dirty Nazi or something equally unpleasant) or I would have been obliged to bid these wanderers farewell and strike out for myself—as indeed, I have been obliged to do.

That (as I am seriously convinced) is exactly what Paul has done to millions of other people. Like myself they very likely would have become good Christians if only Paul had let them. Now I am obliged to meet Christ in a sort of clandestine and roundabout way. That, however, has in no way diminished the welcome I receive. I sometimes even fear that He regrets our separation as much as I. But what can He do? For His compassion is so great that He can even understand and forgive Paul. Has He ever really liked him? I don't know, but I doubt it. I doubt it very much.

Now if all that be true, why was I not contented? Why did I look for others and why wasn't I satisfied with Him alone? Because Jesus too was a very sociable person who liked the presence of His fellow men. And so, in that hidden recess of my soul, where I sometimes entertain my friends of the Laughing Brotherhood (those who say "yea" unto life), you may come across a strangely assorted collection of human beings. There are, I regret to say, no theologians present. They would, of course, be most welcome but they have always refused to cross my threshold. Perhaps that is just as well, for now the rest of us can have a much better time. And Lord have mercy upon us! How the dominies can spoil a party!

And who are the others, who are this "rest"? Well, there are quite a number of philosophers present: Socrates (whom I have already mentioned) and Spinoza and the amiable Immanuel Kant. The still sprightly M. de Voltaire occasionally drops in, though warned that the moment he tries to show us

how terribly clever he can be he will be thrown out on his ear. And there are also several writers who may be counted among the steady guests: Montaigne, who will only come if we promise to provide him with a glass of his beloved Bordeaux, and Erasmus, who prefers the milder wines from the valley of the Moselle, and Thomas More (ale, if you please) and occasionally, when he is not too busy, old Dr. Rabelais will drop in, although we are apt to have a little trouble with him. He is still very much occupied with his beloved Abbey of Thélème. It is an interesting experiment but rather more suited to the tastes of his Gallic neighbours than to ours. My own Flemish antecedents safeguard me against ever being shocked (except by wilful vulgarity), but some of our friends were brought up differently, and why make them uncomfortable if it is not absolutely necessary?

There are, of course, a great many musicians among the steady guests, for they preached the greatest gospel of gaiety of all times, the one that can be understood regardless of the printed or spoken word. Bach and Haydn and Mozart and most of their contemporaries are there. Beethoven occasionally drops in but we have to watch him rather closely, for his manners are apt to be a little—let us say—democratic. Once, however, he no longer feels the necessity of asserting himself or of proving that in spite of his drunken and disreputable father he is really as much of a man as any emperor, king, or mere plain archduke, he is really a very simple and very loyal friend.

Schumann and Schubert, too, will come quite often, and once in a while, at the special request of old Johannes Brahms, we invite the whole Strauss family, and these evenings are well worth remembering. Breughel once made a picture of such a gathering and it hangs in the place of honour, right over the

mantelpiece. For those painters, too, who did not take themselves too seriously are always welcome. So indeed is everyone who will accept us for what we are and who shares our belief that life was meant to be gay, and that it is only our own ignorance, our own cowardice, and our unwillingness to make use of our God-given faculties which prevents it from being so.

I might add that we are often honoured with a visit from some fiddler or other virtuoso. Indeed, every sort of artist has occasionally made his or her appearance. With one exception. We never had any opera singers. They are not deliberately kept out, but somehow they seem to fear that we might occasionally laugh at them and they would not like that at all.

And that, I think, concludes my little chapter on what I believe. It is really surprisingly simple, but why should it be complicated? I cannot for the life of me think of my presence on this earth as anything very important. At birth I was provided with a small quantity of that cosmic energy which is the substance out of which our universe is made. Some of those small quantities of energy were given the shape of plants, while others were disguised as weeds. Some of them were used to give us the figure of a Thomas Jefferson or a Goethe or a Pasteur, while others but served as the physical containers for the destructive energies of a Napoleon or Genghis Khan or the contemptible foulness of a Goebbels. But since that is the way nature seems to have chosen to perform her miracles, it is not up to us to find fault with this arrangement but rather to see what we ourselves can make of that temporary loan from the vast reservoir of energy which is the beginning and end of all things, from Betelgeuse to the microbe who some day will destroy us.

Perhaps you will call this a philosophy of resignation closely bordering upon despair. But there I disagree, and most pro-

foundly. I do not feel that I would get much further or be much happier if I tried to solve that which was apparently meant to be unsolvable for all time, and spent my days endeavouring to discover who or what started all this and who or what will again make an end to it. I know that it was started by some force outside of myself but, having humbly accepted that fact, I refuse to waste my energies on a futile quest (which will never lead me anywhere anyway). I prefer to concentrate my powers upon that which it is within my reach to do: to make this world with its tremendous, with its incredible potentialities for beauty and happiness—a place in which every man, woman, and child will be truly able to say, “We are grateful that we are alive, for life indeed is good!”

To-day that sounds like mocking blasphemy. A hundred centuries hence, it will make sense. For by then man will have acquired the courage necessary to see himself as he really is—as a being equipped with a power of intellect which will eventually allow him to penetrate into every secret of nature until he will truly be the master of all he surveys, and endowed with such a complete freedom of will that he himself—and no one else—is the true master of his fate and therefore dependent for his ultimate happiness upon no one but

HIMSELF.



Beatrice Webb

*It is impossible to disassociate the name of Beatrice Webb from that of her husband, Sidney Webb, Lord Passfield, with whom she has collaborated for forty years in the production of many standard works on social problems, the latest and most monumental of which is "Soviet Communism—A New Civilisation."*

*Born in 1858, and educated privately, she has recorded her own development as a socialist in her book "My Apprenticeship" (1926). Between 1905 and 1920 she served on many government committees on problems ranging from War Pensions to Women in Industry. Apart from her own publications, she has written with Sidney Webb, among very many other important works, "The History of Trade Unionism" (1894), "Problems of Modern Industry" (1898), "English Local Government" (1906), "Decay of Capitalist Civilisation" (1923),\* "English Poor Law History" (1927-1929), "The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain."\**

*Those starred are published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd.*

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OUT OF THE SOCIAL environment and mental climate in which I was born and bred, there seemed to arise two outstanding questions, questions perpetually recurring in my own consciousness from girlhood to old age: Can there be a science of social organization, in the sense in which we have a science of mechanics or a science of chemistry, enabling us to forecast what will happen, and perhaps to alter the event by taking appropriate action or persuading others to take it? Secondly, assuming that there can be, or will be, such a science of society, is man's capacity for scientific discovery the only faculty required for the reorganization of society according to an ideal? Or do we need religion as well as science, emotional faith as well as intellectual curiosity? In the following pages will be found my tentative answer to these two questions—that is, my philosophy of work or life.

The first of these questions, Can there be an applied science of society? led me early in life to choose a particular vocation—the study of social institutions by the methods of personal observation, actual participation in the organization concerned, the taking of evidence, statistical inquiry, and the examination of historical records. My reaction from this long-continued practice of the art of the social investigator has been an ever-deepening conviction of the supreme value in all social activity of the scientific method.

Let me give one or two examples of an applied science of society taken from the public administration of Great Britain during the past hundred years. In the early part of the nine-

teenth century the business of government, whether national or local government, was honeycombed with favouritism, corruption, and barefaced speculation. This wholesale dishonesty on the part of representatives and officials has been largely swept away by the adoption of a social invention of definitely scientific character, namely, the audit—a device which is scarcely a century old. The systematic checking of the cash transactions of all public officials by a special class of independent experts has been found to have an amazing influence not only upon their accuracy but also upon their honesty. Thus, the world can, by taking thought, so far predict and alter the future as positively to grow the habit of honesty on a large scale. Another instance is the discovery, during the past three-quarters of a century, of better methods of selecting persons for responsible or specialized work. During the eighteenth century, alike in central and in local government, nearly all positions of trust and authority were jobbed; that is to say, they were given by those in authority to their own relatives, political supporters, or social hangers-on, however incapable or badly conducted these persons might be. To-day this jobbery has been very nearly eliminated in the British civil service by two or three simple devices. One of these devices, applicable to nearly all first appointments of young persons, is selection by competitive examination, through a non-political board, wholly unconnected with the public authorities which are engaging new employees. Another expedient, more suited to persons of mature age where specific attainments are indispensable, is the device of a prescribed qualification—a qualification tested by the appropriate professional organization—again an organization wholly unconnected with the public authorities concerned. This we have for our official doctors and nurses, civil engineers, accountants, and architects.

Let me give one more instance of the advantage of the scientific study of facts in the way that I have described. A hundred years ago the accepted way of dealing with extreme poverty—what was called destitution—was poor-law relief. This relief took one of two forms—maintenance in the general mixed workhouse or a niggardly dole of unconditional outdoor relief. A century of experience has discredited both. As a result of long-continued observation and experiment by all sorts of persons, officials and philanthropists, recorded in innumerable bluebooks and scientific treatises, there has been gradually created a whole series of new social institutions vitally affecting human behaviour—a veritable framework of prevention. Instead of threatening the sick person with the workhouse if he applied for relief, the public-health authority has come more and more to seek him out, in order to cure him and to prevent any spread of disease. The local education authority now welcomes every child to school, insists that the parents send the child to school reasonably clean, even feeds the child if it is found to require it, and prosecutes the parents who are guilty of wilful neglect. The infant-welfare centre endeavours to look after every birth, instructs the mother how to rear the baby, and offers periodically to examine and weigh the growing infant, so that the mother may know how it is progressing. This may seem a small matter. But the statistician proves to us that during the past thirty years, since these things have been done, only half as many babies die as in the previous generation. What is even more striking is the vast alteration for the better that has been effected by these preventive services in the behaviour of the parents and the children in the way of healthy living, in cleanliness, and even in manners.

There are some of us who believe that it will yet be found

practicable, through observation and experiment, to invent an analogous framework of prevention applicable to that terrible disease of modern industry, mass unemployment.

Have I succeeded by these few illustrations in making the reader realize why I believe that we have already a science of society—a young and very incomplete science, but one that is steadily growing and that is capable of indefinite extension? But it is a science with limitations. Unlike iron and stone and machinery, human beings and social institutions are always changing. They even alter while you are studying them. This is a difficulty which the science of society shares with the science of biology or with that of medicine. But the changes in social institutions are sometimes so catastrophic and far-reaching as completely to baffle our generalizations and nullify our predictions. No student of social facts, however competent, could have forecast the Russian Revolution or the nature of the Soviet Government. No one could have foreseen the sudden development of the Fascist state in Italy. No one could have predicted the rapid rise to prosperity and power of the Czecho-Slovakian republic, the very name of which we can barely pronounce and the exact position of which is unknown to most of us. Here and there, from time to time, there emerges from the mass a man or a group of men whose uncommon qualities are exceptionally influential with the particular race of human beings with whom they come in contact. It may be a captivating personality, it may be religious exaltation, it may be superlative efficiency in the organization of war or in the administration of the State. William James called such great men “ferments,” influences which change the course of life of a whole nation. We may recognize such a ferment in the great leader of the Czecho-Slovakian race, Masaryk. Sometimes these potent individuals appear more like

volcanic eruptions—as with Lenin in Russia and Mussolini in Italy and Gandhi in India. These are as unpredictable by science as an earthquake. But woe betide the great man, be he prophet or warrior or statesman, who forgets not only that the common man exists, but also that it is with the common man that he has to deal. If a Lenin, a Mussolini, or a Gandhi wants to reduce the infant death-rate or to adopt summer time, to create a universal system of public education or to build up a stable democratic state out of millions of men of different races and antagonistic creeds, in Russia, Italy, or India, he must, for all his volcanic power, learn from the knowledge of past and present social institutions the particular devices by which one or other of these things can be created. Before he died Lenin had to admit that in ignoring one common characteristic of the tens of millions of the Russian peasant-cultivators—the desire to better his own circumstances—he had made a big mistake. He had, indeed, to reverse his policy of complete communism, and to permit, at least temporarily, a measure of individual accumulation and private trade. Mussolini may yet find that in suppressing all independence of speech and freedom of the press he has alienated an indispensable factor in a stable and progressive state.

To sum up: The generalization and predictions of the science of society relate to that strange abstraction, the average human being. Here we recognize what might be termed the mystical element in the work of the statistician. What he tells us is the truth, even truth of a high order. But he does not deal with our individual peculiarities. He predicts what will be found true of what is common to all the individuals who make up the group or race of men with which he is dealing. The uncommon, the exceptional, the peculiar characteristics of the individual man, and the manner of his influence, are at

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present and possibly always will be outside the scope of a science of society.

I pass to the second question which has continuously confronted me in my passage through life. Is man's capacity for scientific discovery the only faculty required for the reorganization of society according to an ideal? Or do we need religion as well as science, emotional faith as well as intellectual curiosity?

Very early in my career as a social investigator I realized that science deals only with the processes of life; it has little to say of the purpose of life. We can learn through science how best to kill a man or slaughter a multitude of men; we can discover how to cure a human being of specific diseases and thus raise indefinitely the standard of health. But no amount of personal observation or statistical inquiry will tell us whether we *ought* to kill or to cure. Our behaviour, as parent or child, as colleague or rival, as employer or employed, as private citizen or public official, is largely dictated to us by law or public opinion. But whenever we settle it for ourselves, it seems to depend on intuition or impulse, on likes or dislikes, or to put it in another way, on our emotional outlook on life. Historically, codes of conduct, scales of value, patterns of behaviour—to use the term of my friend, Graham Wallas—are intimately related to contemporary conceptions of man's relation to the universe, whether these notions are woven into magic rites, wrought into religious creeds, or expressed in systems of philosophy incapable of objective verification. My own experience is that in the nobler type of men these guides to conduct appear to rise out of emotive thought, connecting the purpose of individual man with the purpose of the universe, the visible with the invisible world. "Man lives in two



worlds," Professor Haldane tells us in his brilliant exposition of *What I Believe*, "the visible world which changes with time, and an invisible world whose constituents do not change." "I have not very much use for people who are not in touch with the invisible world," he adds somewhat scornfully. The trouble is that when we ask to be put in touch with this invisible world we are given, by this eminent scientist, not the bread of spiritual guidance but the hard stone of pure intellect and a short measure of that! "Among the components of the invisible world are the realities corresponding to mathematical statements like  $16 + 9 = 25$ ." This, literally, is all that he vouchsafes us! Memory recalls my friend Bertrand Russell arguing that the arithmetical proposition that two and two makes four cannot be proved by pure logic, and is merely an empirical truth derived from experience, thus belonging to the visible and not to the invisible world. However that may be, to an undeveloped mind like mine Professor Haldane's exposition of the invisible world is meaningless. It arouses no response either from my intellect or from my emotions.

But why should we expect to describe the invisible world? All we can do is to explain our own state of mind, so that we may enter into communion with those of like temperament, and thus encourage and strengthen each other in our common pilgrimage through life. For my own part, I believe that the mind of man, as distinguished from the appetites and instincts which he shares with other animals, is divided into two parts—the intellectual and the emotional, each having its own methods and sanctions. What is called the scientific method is the highest expression of the intellect; by observation, verification, and reasoning, we can discover how things happen and predict how they will happen under like circumstances,

and, in many instances, by applying this knowledge, we can alter this happening in the direction we desire.

The highest expression of the emotional side of human nature is the attainment of the beautiful and the good; the one represented by art in all its manifestations, the other by varieties of religious experience, leading to what is felt to be the right conduct of life. I have not the artistic temperament and I know not in what state of consciousness this may be embodied; what may be its discipline and its sanctions. But like the majority of the human race I have an incipient religious temperament—a yearning for the mental security of a spiritual home. “Religion,” we are told by Professor Whitehead (*Science and the Modern World*, p. 238), “is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest.”

This vision of something which is real and yet waiting to be realized is associated in my experience with an intuitive use of prayer. A secularist friend once cross-examined me as to what exactly I meant by prayer; he challenged me to define the process of prayer; to describe its happening. I answered I would gladly do so if I could find the words. The trouble is, as Tagore observes about poetry, that words have meanings, or, as I prefer to say, predominantly intellectual meanings; and in a prayer it is emotion, not reason, that seeks an outlet. It is by prayer, by communion with an all-pervading spiritual force, that the soul of man discovers the purpose or goal of human

endeavour. That is why down all the ages of human development prayer has been intimately associated, whether as cause or effect, with the nobler and more enduring forms of architecture and music; associated, too, with poetry and painting, with the awe-inspiring aspects of nature, with the great emotional mysteries of maternity, mating, and death.

To Professor Haldane my longer string of words may seem as meaningless as his curt arithmetical formula does to me. Perhaps we can find common ground in *The Will to Believe*, eloquently expounded by William James, or in *The Philosophy of "As If,"* logically developed by Vaihinger. So far as I understand the conclusion of these eminent metaphysicians—a conclusion which I understand is also held by Einstein—it can be summed up in the proposition that wherever no hypothesis can be scientifically proved or disproved, and yet some hypothesis must be accepted as a starting-point for thought or as a basis for conduct, the individual is justified in selecting the hypothesis which yields the richest results in the discovery of truth or in the leading of a good life. Such a justifiable hypothesis seems to me the faith I hold: that man is related to the universe by an emotional as well as by a rational tie, that there is a spirit of love at work in the universe, and that the emotion of prayer or aspiration reveals to man the ends he should pursue if he desires to harmonize his own purpose with that of the universe; exactly as the working of his intellect discovers the means by which these ends may be best achieved. "Did I ever tell you," writes one of the greatest of British scientific thinkers, Francis Galton, "that I have always made it a habit to *pray* before writing anything for publication, that there may be no self-seeking in it, and perfect candour, together with respect for the feelings of others" (*Life of Francis Galton*, by Karl Pearson, III A, 272).

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But I realize that in the world of to-day science is in the ascendant, while the religious impulse is in eclipse. This decay of religious faith is, I think, a reaction from what is false within the current religious creeds. Throughout the ages, prophets and priests, saints and Sadducees, have dictated to the faithful mythical accounts of how things happens, how they have happened, and how they will happen—whether concerning the beginnings of life on this earth, or the course of the stars, or the diagnosis and cure of disease, or the better organization of society. This unwarranted intrusion of religion into the realm of science, this illegitimate attempt to supersede reason by emotion in respect to the processes of nature has always led and will always lead, at best, to failure to attain the desired ends, at worst, to superstitious practices and degrading magic. Few believers in the scientific method accept as evidence of fact the Biblical narrative of the creation of the world in six days or that of the miracles of the Virgin birth and the resurrection from the dead of the physical body of Jesus of Nazareth. I am aware that these “dogmas” are considered by some practising Christians to be not statements of fact at all, but merely symbols of some invisible truth—appeals to the emotion and not to the intellect. This gloss on the creed of Christendom seems to me lacking in candour.

Thus, like many of my contemporaries, I am a religious outcast; I cannot enjoy, without sacrificing intellectual integrity, the immeasurable benefit of spiritual comradeship, the inner peace arising out of traditional forms of worship, the inspiration of noble motive—all of which I recognize as embodied in the discipline of the great religions of the world, such as Christianity and Buddhism. And while I rejoice in the advance of science, I deplore the desuetude of regular religious services with their encouragement of worship and prayer for

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the good reason that personal experience and the study of history convince me that this absence of the religious habit leads to an ugly chaos in private and public morals and to a subtle lowering of the sense of beauty—witness the idol of the subhuman, the prevalence of crude animalism, in much of the music, art, and literature of the twentieth century.

But to my mind there is one hopeful portent. Men of science endowed with the religious temperament are to-day reinterpreting the mystical meaning of the universe; and it is they who may bring about a new synthesis between our discovery of the true and our self-dedication to the beautiful and the good.

## AN INTERPOSITION

1940

TEN years after writing the foregoing essay I was asked to contribute a postscript stating whether or not I had changed my outlook on man's relation to man, and man's relation to the universe. I answered I would gladly do so if I might use the space permitted to sum up the result of four years' study of the internal organisation of the Soviet Union.

To-day, with two great wars raging on the European and Asiatic continents, in one of which my own country is a belligerent, this favourable estimate of the social institutions of another great power who is also waging war, and to put it mildly, not as our ally, seems to call for a summary statement of what I believe or do not believe about the right and wrong in international relations.

First let me note that during the fifty years' research the Webbs have been exclusively concerned with the *internal*

social organisation of particular countries: more especially those countries which are assumed to represent what is termed Western Civilization, that uncongenial triplet of the Christian Faith, Capitalist Profitmaking and Political Democracy. This western civilization has two outstanding achievements to its credit. Through the use of power, mechanisation, and mass production carried out by multitudes of weekly wage-earners, the wealth of the nations has been enormously increased. But it has done more than this. By sweeping away the network of feudal obligations between king and baron, lord and his tenant, and the craftsman and his guild, and by substituting for these outworn ties the individualist creed of free competition with the minimum of state interference, western civilization has secured for the fortunate few who have inherited, or gained, a secure and sufficient livelihood, an absence of restraint in thought, word, and act unknown to the mediaeval world. Unfortunately, this same capitalist profitmaking system has led to mass destitution, to low wages, long hours, bad housing, and insufficient food. Through these means the all-powerful governing class of landlords and capitalists have, in fact, refused to multitudes of men, women, and children, that other ingredient of personal freedom—the presence of opportunity to live a healthy, happy, and cultured life. What is even more disastrous to the welfare of the community is the constantly recurring unemployment of millions of men, gradually producing a hard kernel of workless persons, mostly young persons, who become as years pass by veritable parasites. There is also a sinister decline of the birth-rate which threatens the survival of our race as a significant factor in human progress.

This preoccupation with the internal structure of western civilization, more especially as manifested in Great Britain,

has prevented us from studying international relations with the view of preventing the more sensational tragedy of great wars between sovereign states, intent on extending their territory or their influence by military conquests. But apart from this absence of knowledge, I confess to an absence of any living philosophy which would enable me, assuming I had the knowledge, to decide what is right and what is wrong on the all-important question of waging war in order to maintain or to alter the status quo.

Are wars right when they succeed and wrong when they fail? This, I fear, is the usual historical verdict. Venizelos, on reading in Fisher's *History of Europe* that the Greek invasion of Asia Minor in 1919 was a mistake, is reported to have smiled ironically and said: "Every enterprise that does not succeed is a mistake." This solution I do not accept. It not only denies all ethical values, but it leads to increased armaments within all sovereign states, whether for defence or aggression. Worst of all, this test of success implies the glorification of the warlike man with his lust for slaughter, or versed in the art of organised spying and lying, to discover the tactics of the enemy and to deceive the hostile forces with regard to the tactics of his own High Command. Success or failure tests not the relative rightness of the war aims of the combatants, but the presence or absence of the requisite knowledge and the needful capacity to win the war, whatever their war aim may be.

Are all wars wrong, even in defence of your own country, as is asserted by the complete pacifist? I cannot accept that solution for the simple reason that in so far as the internal organisation of a sovereign state is concerned, I am convinced of the need for the policeman, the judiciary, and an all-powerful executive who will use, if necessary, physical force to carry

out the law of the land. What is needed within one sovereign state seems to me equally imperative in establishing and maintaining a world order designed to prevent mutual slaughter between the members of a super-national world state. The pacifist retorts: "No such order is in sight. Meanwhile, there is no analogy between the individual criminal and the so-called criminal nation. In war the innocent masses who have no quarrel with their foreign comrades kill one another, and if there are individual criminal leaders they get off scot free." I agree. But how can such a world order be gained by the human race? I suggest that the refusal on the part of the self-governing inhabitants of a particular area to defend themselves against conquests and exploitation by a powerful neighbour, encourages the warlike spirit and has, in fact, led to other governments seeking to do likewise with other independent states. I go further. I believe in the rightness of wars of independence: that is, organized resistance to the military occupation of a territory by a foreign power; for instance the American War of Independence, and the Italian armed resistance to the continuation of Austrian domination. These wars of independence are in fact the only way of bringing about the root principle of any future world order, the self-determination, wherever practicable, of the inhabitants of a given area.

Are wars of aggression wrong, and wars of defence right? In that case Great Britain is the greatest sinner the world has ever known. Right through the nineteenth century, and even for the first decade of the twentieth, Great Britain has been continuously waging wars to extend the frontiers of her immense empire with its 500 millions of inhabitants; little wars in Asia and Africa, which are not talked about, and which when challenged are explained, sometimes as defending



her existing frontiers by the simple plan of extending them; sometimes as the white man's burden in order to impose western civilization on yet another barbarous race. I note, in passing, that it is only one party of that discordant triplet that is introduced to the barbarians: the capitalist exploitation of native labour. The Christian faith is left to the unaided efforts of self-devoted missionaries, whilst political democracy is anathema.

Alas for the peace of the world! Other governments with powerful armies have been anxious to assume the white man's burden. Towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, British citizens found themselves fighting, or threatening to fight, the French in North Africa, the South African Dutch, and eventually the new-comer in power politics, the recently formed German Empire, in the common quest of new lands to conquer. Apart from the natural instinct to wish for the victory of one's own country, right or wrong, which denies alike the value of knowledge and morality, we were neutral in these wars. Was the Boer War right or wrong? We refused to express any opinion, thereby incurring the disapproval both of the British imperialists and of the pro-Boers: a most unpleasant situation when you happen to have near relatives and intimate friends as leaders on both sides of the controversy. So far as we had any opinion we endorsed Bernard Shaw's summary of Fabian principles in his pamphlet *Fabianism and the Empire*; its conclusions being that the only justification for the conquest of an inferior race by a superior race, was the determination to educate the natives up to the level of self-government so that the inhabitants of the given territory should enjoy the maximum opportunity for a free, happy, and vigorous life. The Boer farmers, the British gold diggers, and their respective governments had no such intention.

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In the Great War of 1914-18 we again felt that we did not know sufficient of the circumstances out of which it started, to have an opinion whether our country was right or wrong. Here I may mention a curious incident. On the Saturday before the British Government declared war on Germany and Austria we met at the National Liberal Club a group of distinguished liberal journalists and politicians who had drawn up a manifesto against a declaration of war, and asked us to sign it. We answered that we had not the requisite knowledge of current affairs to express an opinion. On the following Thursday two of this group came to our house and asked us to sign a manifesto in favour of the war, because of the German invasion of Belgium. We repeated that we knew no more on Thursday than we did on the preceding Saturday, and again refused to express an opinion. When war broke out and truth-telling immediately became seditious, we had no facts to go on. The air was full of theories, rumours, prejudices, enthusiasms, hatreds. Nobody knew the whole truth. The unprecedentedly frank revelations made by our statesmen many years later, culminating in Mr. Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* proved that even in the War Cabinet there was no fully concerted action nor shared knowledge.

Of course we could not look on blindly. For what *were* the war aims of the allies in 1914? Publicly our government declared war on Germany and Austria to prevent the absorption of Serbia by Austria, and to resist the invasion of neutral Belgium by the German army. These aims did not account for the military talks between the British and the French governments from 1906 onwards, leading to a secret alliance, undivulged to parliament and even unknown to some members of the liberal government, to prevent Germany from seizing North African territory, or from marching by

diplomatic or military measures through the Balkan states on the road to Bagdad, thereby threatening our Asiatic empire. Then came the last declaration of war aims on the part of the allies. President Wilson, on bringing the U.S.A. into the war in 1917 on the side of the allies, eloquently proclaimed that it was a war to end war by making the world safe for democracy. To achieve that end he laid down the famous fourteen points, including: Article IV, "Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety," and Article V, "A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined." These fourteen points were accepted by Great Britain and France as the basis for the future peace.

Finally, are wars right or wrong according to the peace imposed by the victors on the vanquished? If that be so, the Great War proved to be an outstanding failure. No one can suggest that the war of 1914-18, with the slaughter of ten million men, and innumerable women and children, made the world safe for democracy, or secured a durable peace by checking the armaments race. The Treaty of Versailles did not and was not intended to fulfil these aims. All that was done, whether by the following treaties or by the establishment of the League of Nations, was to divide the European and Asiatic world into two groups of powerful states, the "Haves" and the "Have nots"; the one in favour of defending the status quo, and the other bent on recovering territory lost in the war, or seeking new lands to conquer. To-day only two of the six Great Powers are members of the League of Nations.

At last we come to the war which is raging to-day. The Soviet statesmen, having watched for six years at Geneva the betrayal by the Western Democracies of collective security, assumed to be the fundamental principle of the League of Nations, and, be it added, having experienced for 23 years diplomatic bad manners on the part of Great Britain and France, have changed over from the policy of a "one and indivisible peace," to that of power politics pure and simple. I regret their invasion of Finland, even though it be excused as recovery of territory lost in the war, deemed needful to the future security of the Soviet Union. But as a British citizen I am most concerned with the war aims of my own government. How far our guarantee to the new Sovereign State of Poland, and of the existing frontiers, including large territories, formerly belonging to Germany and inhabited by Germans was right or wrong, I do not know; but once undertaken it had, I assume, to be fulfilled. What troubles me is that judging by the official pronouncements of the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet, this aim has been superseded by another: we are fighting *to destroy Hitlerism*. If these words have any meaning it involves the supersession of the present internal organization of the Third Reich by social institutions which our government happens to approve of.

Here I trench on the subject matter of our fifty years' research into the internal organization of particular countries. Experience seems to me to prove that any attempt on the part of a foreign power to interfere in the internal organization of another country by military force produces one of three results, all alike hostile to the maintenance of peace. It may unite all the inhabitants of the country, whatever their opinion, against the invader, as was the case with our intervention in

1919-22 in Russia on behalf of the restoration of the Tzarist regime. Or, it may start a civil war within a territory in which case the invading army would have to take one side or the other; or it may result, as did the Peace of Vienna in 1815, in the forceful restoration by foreign powers, of a discarded king, and the consequent series of revolutions which lasted until the French Republic of 1871, upsetting the peace of Europe. But this is not the only misgiving I have about our declared or undeclared war aims. It has been suggested that if we succeed in destroying Hitlerism and re-establishing the capitalist profitmaking system into a semi-socialised Germany, there will be an alliance between Great Britain, France and Germany "to destroy Stalinism" in the U.S.S.R. I suggest that the rapid action of the League of Nations in condemning the Soviet aggression of Finland and the peremptory expulsion of the Soviet Union from the League of Nations, was not only inspired by an objection to aggression, but also because our and the French governing class vehemently objects to the internal structure of the U.S.S.R. Otherwise what is the explanation of the fact that when Japan started out to conquer China, a member of the League, and an ancient civilization of some 400 million inhabitants, based on pacifist principles, our representative at the League of Nations refused to permit an immediate condemnation of Japan, leave alone its expulsion from the League of Nations?

Hence, I think, before the British Government proceeds to further hostile action against the Soviet Union, it may be desirable that public opinion should be informed as to the structure and working of the social institutions recently established in that huge continent. In order to contribute, however imperfectly, to this knowledge, I am glad to add to my original statement, first published in 1930, the postscript

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of 1939 describing what I believe to be the relative value of planned production for community consumption—the economic order of the U.S.S.R.—to the capitalist profitmaking which dominates our own country. Omitting the first paragraph which sums up the preceding essay, here it is:

## POSTSCRIPT

1939

Now it so happens that since the publication of my essay my husband and I have visited Russia and spent our energies by our practised methods in studying the political, economic, and cultural organization of the U.S.S.R.; the available result being 1,400 pages, some of which are perhaps technically important rather than romantically readable. In this postscript I shall not attempt to summarize them: I shall limit myself to what seems to us a vital discovery in social science made and in process of being applied by the Soviet Government, throughout their vast territory with its 180 million inhabitants. If it be desired to maximize the production of services and commodities and to distribute them in a way that will bring about a healthy, happy, and cultured life, for all the inhabitants, irrespective of race occupation, the exploitation of man by man, whether by landlord, capitalist employer, trader or financier, must be made a penal offence, to be prevented, prohibited, and if persisted in, punished, exactly as theft and fraud are dealt with in capitalist states.

Why must profitmaking be made a crime? Because the Bolsheviks believe that the profitmaking motive leads inevitably and universally to a corruption and perversion of the economic system; that it divides the community into two

nations, the rich and the poor; that it concentrates power in the hands of the wealthy, and keeps the wage-earners and the peasants in a state of poverty and dependence; that it produces a disastrous alternation of booms and slumps, with a permanent army of unemployed persons, tragically deteriorating in health and happiness, skill and character. This profitmaking motive even leads to the destruction of natural resource, and turns forests and fertile plains into sand-swept deserts.

What is the substitute for the profitmaking motive? The alternative has been discovered in planned production for community consumption. This does not mean the abolition of personal property, or having all things in common. On the contrary, there has been and still is a steadily increasing amount of personal property in the U.S.S.R. But it is distributed among the whole population: none of it is heaped unconditionally upon a class of rich persons. It does not mean the universal engagement at wages, by the State, or the Consumers' Co-operative Movement. More than half of all the families of the U.S.S.R. are not working for wages at all, but are working with their own instruments of production, either individually or co-operatively, living in their own houses and sharing among themselves their own produce; for instance, in the quarter of a million collective farms. But they must not hire labour, or engage in trading or speculation, or let their property to rent-paying tenants.

The scant space of a postscript does not permit an explanation of the constitution and working of the central planning department (Gosplan) at Moscow, with its elaborate statistical and audit departments, and its subsidiary regional industrial, agricultural and cultural departments, scattered over the huge territory of the U.S.S.R. The purpose of Gosplan is to combine the maximum of production with the minimum of expenditure

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in the shortest possible time. Hence it develops its own type of efficiency movement, and its own brand of rationalization. Judged by the amount produced, whether in capital or consumers goods, in railways or canals, in hospitals or universities, in scientific research or holiday resorts, this planned production for community consumption has been brilliantly successful. Remember that the Soviet Government started with an immense territory, inhabited by 160 millions; the vast majority being poverty-stricken, illiterate and deplorably superstitious. For the first two or three years it was confronted, not only by civil war, but by invading armies, the Germans, then the British, American, French, and lastly the Japanese. In the ensuing twenty years the Soviet government have built up a great manufacturing industry, to-day in aggregate output second only to that of the United States; they have mechanised their agriculture, thereby not only securing the nation's food supply, but also greatly increasing their harvests of flax and hemp, cotton and tea. Incidentally they have abolished mass unemployment. And now I come to the greatest achievement. From the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea, from the Baltic to the Pacific, they have created a gigantic health and educational system, a universal network of crèches and schools, colleges and universities, clinics and hospitals, research institutes and sanatoria, always increasing in number and variety, and accessible to the whole of the population without class or racial discrimination.

This success is due to their being no enemy party. The General Council of Trade Unions who take an active part in state planning, and are the supreme authority for settling wage rates, know that the amount available each year for wages and salaries will be estimated according to the past productivity of the workers by hand and brain. There is, in fact, a



deliberately fixed wage fund for each successive year. Hence the trade unions have started what is called "socialist emulation"; each individual in each plant competes with other individuals and other plants, in seeking to produce more commodities for the wages received. They are all equally anxious to use any method of remuneration, or to introduce any machinery, lessening effort and increasing productivity. What is even more surprising is the device of "patronage." If one factory has beaten another factory in the race for increased production, it is in honour bound to send its best men, and even provide machines, to bring the other factory up to the level of production. This sounds romantic. But as the amount to be distributed depends on *the total production during the past year of all the workers in all the plants*, it is in the interests of each plant to increase the productivity of every other plant. That is obvious. And here we touch on the scale of values, the code of conduct, which inspires the planned production for community consumption. The dominant motive in everyone's life ought to be, not the pecuniary self-interest of each individual, but the wealth and consequent well-being of all the people, all the time. For it is clear that every man starts adult life in debt to the community in which he has been born and bred, cared for, fed and clothed, educated and entertained. Anyone who, to the extent of his ability, does less than his share of work, and takes a full share of the wealth produced in the community, is considered a thief and is treated as such. On the other hand, those who do more than their share of the work that is useful to the community, who invent or explore, who excel in the arts and crafts, who are able and devoted leaders in production or administration, are not only provided with every pecuniary or other facility for pursuing their chosen careers, but are also

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honoured as heroes and publicly proclaimed as patterns of behaviour.

Thus, in planned production for community consumption, the secular and the religious are one. The good life at which the citizen aims is the life that is beneficial to all his fellow men, irrespective of age or sex, religion or race.

H. G. Wells

Herbert George Wells, scientist, novelist, historian, educator, political thinker, social philosopher, and prophet, was born in 1866, the son of a professional cricketer. The number of his writings is enormous, and the range of his interests during three generations is probably unequalled. So also has been his influence on the whole English-speaking world, with the exception probably of his friend and contemporary, George Bernard Shaw. He needs no introduction to the readers of this book.

The following are some of his best known books—there are very many others of equal importance: “*The Time Machine*” (1895); “*The Invisible Man*” (1897); “*Love and Mr. Lewisham*” (1900); “*Kipps*” (1905); “*Tono Bungay*” (1909); “*The History of Mr. Polly*” (1910); “*Mr. Britling Sees it Through*” (1916); “*The Outline of History*” (1920); “*A Short History of the World*” (1922); “*Christina Alberta’s Father*” (1925); “*The World of William Clissold*” (1926); “*The Open Conspiracy*” (1928); with Julian Huxley and G. P. Wells, “*The Science of Life*” (1929); “*The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*” (1932); “*The Shape of Things to Come*” (1933); “*Experiments in Autobiography*” (1934); “*The New Social Order*” (1940).

## H. G. Wells

**I**T HAS EXERCISED my mind a lot to find out how much I could tell you of my credo in a few thousand words or so. Because I suppose that means telling what I think I am, why I exist, what I think I am for, what I think of life, what I think of the world about me, and things like that. These are questions to which I have given innumerable hours—in conversation, in reading and writing, in lonely places, and particularly in that loneliest place of all, the dark stillness of the night. Anyhow I am going to try.

In the perfume factories of Grasse, in Provence, they show you little bottles of concentrated extract. In this little bottle, they tell you, they have condensed the scent of half a million roses; in this, acres and acres of jasmine. In this brief paper I shall try to give you the gist of many thousands of nights and days of thought. I shall try to make myself as clear as possible, but you must forgive me if now and then I have to be more concentrated than explicit.

I can say best what I have to say by talking first about immortality. I shall open my matter with a question. Here I am, setting down my thoughts; and there you are, reading them. We are having mental intercourse, sharing our ideas. Our mental lives are in contact. The question I would put is this: how far can we consider this mental life we are sharing to be immortal? And more particularly I would ask you a question I have often asked myself. What is this H. G. Wells who is now thinking before you and with you?

Now what do you suppose our little conference amounts to?

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What is happening now? You are Mr. So-and-So, or Mrs. So-and-so, or Miss So-and-so, and someone called H. G. Wells is talking to you through the medium of print. That is what most people will call self-evident fact. That is what will pass muster as the truth of the matter. But is it altogether true? Let us go into things a little more precisely. I will talk about my side of the discussion, which is H. G. Wells, but what I have to say will apply quite as well to your side also.

This H. G. Wells is a visible tangible human being who was born in the year 1866 and who has since gone here and there and done this and that. His words are here, some thought that may be considered to be his is here, but are you sure that all of him is present? May I point out that, far from all of him being present in this discussion, very much of him is not present anywhere. The greater part of him is no longer in existence. It is dead. It is past and largely forgotten. He is already, for the most part, as dead as his grandfather.

Let me explain a little more fully what I mean by this. Consider the childhood of this human being. I will tell you of one incident in it. In 1867 he was a small and extremely troublesome infant. He felt things vividly and expressed himself violently. He had, one day, a great and terrible adventure. It must have seemed like the end of the world to him. He was lying on a sofa and he rolled about upon it and fell off. He must have been scared by that fall. But also he fell on a glass bottle. It broke. He was cut very dreadfully about the face. This body I have with me to-day still bears a scar over one eye. No doubt he was frightened and hurt, taken up and soothed. The doctor came and sewed him up.

What a storm of feeling, what a fuss it must have been! Yes, but what do I know of all that now? Nothing, nothing



BEATRICE WEBB

[Vandyck



H. G. WELLS

[Photo: Schaal



whatever except what my mother told me of it; nothing else at all. All the fear, all the feeling, all the details of the event have gone out of my conscious existence. All that is quite dead. Now, can I really say that H. G. Wells of one year old is here? You will say, perhaps, "Of course he is." There is the scar. And if that child of twelve months old had not existed, how could this present writer exist?

But wait a moment. That grandfather of mine! He was a gardener and he was rather good at growing roses. One day toward the end of the reign of King George III he stood in the sunshine in a garden at Penshurst and budded a rose. I know that for a fact, just as completely as I know for a fact that H. G. Wells fell off a sofa in 1867. And also, be it noted, if my grandfather had not existed, the present writer could not exist. My nose and my eyes would not be the shape and colour they are. If the scar is H. G. Wells of 1867, the eye is Joseph Wells of 1828. So, by the same test, if that infant H. G. Wells is alive here, his grandfather is alive here, and so far as one is dead and forgotten, so is the other. There is the same physical continuity; there is the same forgetfulness.

Now this idea that the H. G. Wells who writes this is not all of H. G. Wells is a very important idea in my credo. It is not only that I who am speaking am not in any real sense that baby of 1867, but it is also that I am not a certain ill and angry young man of twenty who lived in 1886. He was struggling in the world under what he thought was an unjustly heavy handicap, and he talked and he wrote. I have photographs of him as he was then; I have stuff that he wrote. And for the life of me I cannot identify my present self with him. I have left him behind almost as completely as I have left my grandfather behind. On the other hand, I have been recently collaborating with one of my sons. We share many ideas and

we have very similar mental dispositions. I feel at present much more closely identified with him than with that young H. G. Wells of 1886: or even with the H. G. Wells of 1896, who I find from a photograph wore side whiskers and a cascade moustache and rode about the countryside on a bicycle. I don't remember ever looking at those moustache and side whiskers in a looking-glass. If it were not for the photograph I could easily have denied that moustache.

And now let us turn to another aspect of this curious inquiry. This train of thought which is talking to you now is something very much less than H. G. Wells, who is, from my point of view, already very largely dead. But it is also something very much *more* than H. G. Wells. You and I are thinking whether there is anything immortal in ourselves. Now H. G. Wells never started that topic. It came to him. He heard people talking about it and preaching about it. He read about it. People who died in Egypt five thousand years ago and whose names and faces and habits are utterly forgotten were talking about it. Plato, Buddha, Confucius, St. Paul have all had something important to say on the matter. That discussion came into *our* lives as we grew up. We may participate in it, change it a little, before we pass it on. It is like a light passing through a prism which may test it, refract it perhaps, polarize it perhaps, and send it on again *changed*. We are so to speak prisms. The thoughts existed before we were born and will go on after we have been finished with altogether.

Now here, you see, is something more—and something very fundamental—of what I am trying to say to you. Either this will seem the most lucid of realities or the most fantastic of speculations. But first let us have what I am putting to you plain. Here, I say, is this H. G. Wells who is talking, and he is—I have tried to show—so far from being immortal that the

greater part of him is already dead and gone forever. I will not presume to apply the obvious parallel to you. That is your affair. But also over and above this H. G. Wells is something, a living growth and a continual refining of ideas, a thought process which is bringing our minds together. And this thought process has lived already thousands of years ago and may, so far as we know, passing from mind to mind and from age to age, continue its life forever. We are mortal persons responding to the advance of perhaps immortal ideas. We are not ourselves only; we are also part of human experience and thought.

I hope I have made my meaning clear thus far. You may not agree with me exactly, but I hope you have understood me, so that I can go on to the next article in my credo.

A second very fundamental question which man has been debating with himself for many centuries, and which comes to most of us in due time and perplexes us, is the question of what is an individual. It is a question that joins on very closely to these ideas about immortality. How is the individual related to the species? How is the part related to the whole? How is the one related to the many? How is he or she as a whole related to everything in his or her make-up? A great part of the dialogues of Plato, for instance, consists of experiments and explorations about this group of questions. The controversies of the Schoolmen centred upon it. Our modern professors of philosophy do not attach sufficient importance to the issues between the Nominalists and the Realists. They were of fundamental importance.

I agree that to a lot of people this sort of discussion will seem hairsplitting, tedious, and unmeaning. They will fail to see what it is about and what good it is. They feel sure they

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are individuals, and that is an end to the matter. They will say that they do not want to bother their heads about it. Quite a lot of people seem to live now chiefly to escape having their heads bothered about anything, but most of that kind have probably stopped reading this a while ago, if ever they began. To many, however, these questions are full of meaning, and to some of us they are among the most important questions in the world. They are so to me, and I cannot explain what I believe at all without discussing them.

I suppose the ordinary and obvious answer to this question of what is an individual would be to say it is a living being detached from the rest of the world. It is born or hatched as a definite, distinctive body; it maintains itself for a certain time against the rest of the universe, and at last it dies and comes to a physical end. But is that an impregnable statement? If one pries into descriptive biology or into modern psychology, one finds first one curious fact and then another coming up to weaken and undermine this idea of the complete integrity of individuals. They are not so definitely marked off as we are to think.

Go first to the biologist. He will agree that men and cats and dogs are very individual creatures. He will probably say that they are strongly individualized. But when you ask him if that is true of all living things, he will at once say, "No." He will tell you that most plants seem much more individualized than they are. You can take a plant and break it up into a number of plants. Are they new individuals or are they fractions of the old one? You can even take two plants of different species and graft them together. What is the grafted plant—a new individual, or one or both of the old ones? Trees seem to be much more individual than they really are, just as mountains do. It is a disposition of our minds to think of them

as individuals. We talk of the Jungfrau or the Wetterhorn as if they were as complete and distinct as pyramids, but really they are only outstanding peaks on a general mountain mass.

And it is not only the vegetable kingdom that is wanting in distinct individuality. The biologist will tell you of innumerable species of lower animals also, of which two sometimes come together and coalesce into one and one will break up into two or many; and again of individuals that branch off others but never separate and so become what are called colonies, a sort of superindividual. If the higher animals could do as the lower animals do, we should have Herr Hitler coalescing with Mr. Stalin into one individual to the great dismay of the Anti-Comintern—and we should have Mr. Winston Churchill breaking up into dozens and scores of Winston Churchills, and writing books, painting pictures, forming governments, commanding and constituting armies and navies, and carrying every aspect of his versatility to the last extreme. I am afraid he would insist upon it.

But the biologist assures us that all the higher animals have lost their powers of combining and dividing and spreading themselves out. They are highly individualized, he says; they are unified and drawn together, they are cut off from the rest of the universe and concentrated in their bodies, to a degree no other creatures have attained. These individualities such as we human beings possess are an exception and not the rule among living things. They are not the common fashion of life.

But though we are highly individualized, says the biologist, our kind of creature is not completely individualized. He will tell you of various curious cases when sheep and cats and dogs and babies have been born with two heads to one body or two bodies to one head. When there are two heads, where is the individual then? And he will bring home to you the fact that

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a great part of our bodily selves is unknown to us. We do not even know what is inside these bodies of ours until we learn about it from talk and lessons and books, and unless trouble is brewing we do not know what goes on inside there nor how it feels. Our particular individuality, in fact, does not penetrate to our interiors.

And if you will let the biologist run on, he will tell you that in the blood vessels and substance of our body are millions of little beings; which are extraordinarily like some of the smallest, lowest microscopic animals which lead independent lives, and these go about in our bodies as citizens go about in the streets and houses of a city. These little beings, these corpuscles, kill disease germs, carry food and air about, and do a multitude of services. They have minute individualities of their own. We are made up of millions of such minute creatures, just as cities and nations are made of millions of such beings as ourselves. There are, you see, different ranks and kinds of individuality. It is not the simple matter so many people assume it to be.

Now when we turn from the modern biologist to the modern psychologist, we get still more remarkable revelations about this individuality of ours, which seems at first so simple. He tells us of minds split and divided against themselves. I do not know whether you have read of cases of what is called divided personality. They are fascinatingly strange. They are rare, but they occur. There are people who suddenly forget who they are. The ordinary personality gives place to a different one. That may happen under hypnotism; it may happen in cases of insanity.

But it may also happen without either hypnotism or insanity. In the same brain and in the same body it is possible for first one and then another personality to take control. Perhaps

H. G. WELLS

you have read a story of R. L. Stevenson's which was suggested by these cases—the story of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. That puts these phenomena in an extreme, fantastic fashion, and it ascribes the change-over to a drug. But the change in the actual cases occurs without a drug. Quite a number of us go some little way toward such a change. Which of us, indeed, has not a better self and a worse self?

I am making this appeal to biology and psychology as brief as possible, but I think I have at least said enough to show you the support I find in these sciences for my profound doubt whether this H. G. Wells of mine is really the completely independent, separate, distinct being that it is our habit of mind to consider him. Perhaps my individuality, my personality, seems to be distincter than it is. Perhaps it is—how shall I put it?—a convenient biological illusion.

I could produce a great mass of facts to support that belief, to show how individuality has arisen in the course of evolution and how every individual is, as it were, a sort of experiment made by nature to test this and that group of qualities. In collaboration with Julian Huxley and my son, G. P. Wells, I have been trying to present that mass of facts to the general reader in a work called *The Science of Life*, but our utmost efforts to compress and simplify leave us with a large book. So I can only allude to it here as being full of light upon this issue, the sort of light there is no time to give you now, and then turn to another aspect of this question of "What am I?" and "What are you?"

Let us look within. How do you feel about your identity with yourself? Well, anyhow, let me tell you how *I* feel about H. G. Wells. I have already tried to show that as a matter of fact a lot of him is already dead stuff and irrelevant stuff, and

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I have also tried to show that this *thought* that is talking to you is something very much more than H. G. Wells.

And when it comes to introspection, then I feel, very, very clearly, that I am something very distinct from this individual H. G. Wells who eats and sleeps and runs about the world. I feel that I am linked to him as a boat may be moored to a floating buoy. More than this, I have to use his voice, see with his eyes, experience the pain of any physical misfortune that comes to him. He is my window on the world and my mouthpiece. I have to think in his brain, and his store of memories is my only reference library. I doubt if I can think or feel or act as an individual without him. But I do not feel that I am he.

I take a great interest in him. I keep him as clean as I can and am always on the watch to prevent him getting sulky, dull, or lazy—not always with success. He has to be petted and persuaded. I like to be told he is good and remarkable, just as I like to be told my automobile is a good one. But sometimes I wish I could get away from him—heavens, how I wish it at times! He is clumsy in all sorts of ways, and un-beautiful. Some of his instincts and appetites are dreadful. He begins to show considerable signs of wear. The reference library in him might be better arranged and the brain cells quicker at the uptake. But he is all I have to keep me in touch with the world. When he goes, I believe that I shall go. I shall be silenced for ever.

Now there is nothing original in this sense of detachment from myself. Most people get to something of the sort. When we are young, we identify ourselves with ourselves very completely and fiercely. That may be a biological necessity. But as we ripen—or as we age—the separation widens. All through the historical past of our race one can trace this feel-



ing of detachment. They used to call the part that is talking to you now the soul, and the rejected part the body; but that is not quite my point of view.

The H. G. Wells I look down upon is mental just as much as he is physical; he is the whole individualized, self-centred personality. When I read St. Paul and find him talking of the Old Adam and the New Adam, he seems to be saying something very much nearer to the truth than that popular distinction of body and spirit. When he cries, "Who can deliver me from the body of this death?" I find him very understandable. How warmly have I echoed that cry! My feeling is just that sense of being *thought*—a part of a great process of thought—which finds itself entangled, as some young creature may be entangled in its egg membranes, in an overdeveloped, overintense, overlimited egotism.

Now what I am saying here is not, I believe, an orthodox Christian view. Orthodox Christianity insists that we are ourselves forever and ever. My credo is much nearer Stoicism. It is, indeed, Stoicism seen in the light of modern biological science. I do not believe in the least that either the body of H. G. Wells or his personality is immortal, but I do believe that the growing process of thought, knowledge, and will of which we are parts, of which I am a part, and of which you are a part, may go on growing in range and power without limit. I think that Man may be immortal, but not men.

There you have what I believe about myself, given to you as precisely and clearly as I can. Man, I take it—Man in us—is more important than the things in the individual life, and this I believe not as a mere sentimentality, but as a rigorously true statement of biological and mental fact. Our individuality is, so to speak, an inborn obsession from which we shall escape as we become more intelligent. And we are under a necessity

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to escape from it as we become more intelligent, because increasing intelligence brings us more and more clearly face to face with the ultimate frustration of every individual desire in age, enfeeblement, and death. Personality, individuality, may be a biological device which has served its end in evolution and will decline. A consciousness of something greater than ourselves—the immortal soul of the race—may be taking control of the direction of our lives.

If I had the time and erudition, I think I could make an argument to show that this idea of the immortal soul of the race in which our own lives are like passing thoughts, is to be found in what Confucius called the Higher Person, in what St. Paul called the New Adam, in the Logos of Stoics, in the modern talk we hear of the Overman or Superman. But I cannot pursue these suggestions now.

But if I might say a word or so about the views one gets from this credo, I should insist first that the subordination of self to a higher order of being does not mean the suppression of all or any of one's distinctive gifts. We have to use ourselves to the utmost. We have to learn and make to the full measure of our possibilities. It is a sin to bury the talent, the individual gift which we possess for the good of the greater being, Man.

Nor must you imagine that the subordination of self to the immortal being of the race means a subordination of one's narrow self to the equally narrow selves of other people. It is for them also to give themselves to that life and all that increases knowledge and power. I do not believe in the surrender of one jot or one tittle of one's intelligence and will to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, or to the will of the majority, or any such nonsense: I am not that sort of democrat. This world and its future is not for feeble folk any

more than it is for selfish folk. It is not for the multitude, but for the best. The best of to-day will be the commonplace of to-morrow.

If I am something of a social leveller, it is not because I want to give silly people a good time, but because I want to make opportunity universal, and not leave out one single being who is worth while. If I want economic change, it is because the present system protects and fosters a vast swarm of wasteful spenders, no better in their quality and much worse in their lazy pretentious traditions than the general run of mankind. If I am opposed to nationalism and war, it is not merely because these things represent an immense waste of energy, but because they sustain a cant of blind discipline and loyalty and a paraphernalia of flags, uniforms, and parades that shelter a host of particularly mischievous, unintelligent bullies and wasters; because they place our lives at the mercy of trained blockheads. Militarism and warfare would be childish things, if they were not more horrible than anything childish can be. They must become things of the past. They must die. Naturally my idea of politics is an open conspiracy to hurry these tiresome, wasteful, evil things—nationality and war—out of existence; to end this empire and that empire, and set up the one Empire of Man.

And it is natural that I should exalt that continual process of questioning which we call science. In the scientific world I find just that disinterested devotion to great ends that I hope will spread at last through the entire range of human activity. I find just that co-operation of men of every race and colour to increase Man's knowledge. We can all be citizens of the free state of science. But our political, our economic, our social lives have still to become illuminated and directed by the scientific spirit, are still sick and feeble with congenital traditionalism.

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A page or so before this, I have written "Man 'may be' immortal." When first I wrote this credo I wrote with more confidence, "is immortal." Since then I have scrutinized the possible *Fate of Man* more narrowly, and I have replaced my certitude by a more cautious statement. I realize more clearly than I did that Man's future is conditional upon his foresight and his ability to face the changing conditions of life about him. The world has plainly become much darker and more dangerous in the last few years. Open free speech has ceased over vast areas. There has been much promiscuous killing, much waste of natural resources and much economic disorganization. Violence has made headway against the world's peace, and the level of civilized life is visibly sinking. The element of hope many of us entertained for a new way of living in Soviet Russia has dwindled, almost to nothing. The call for positive activities to arrest the decay is much more urgent than it was. A few years ago one could write "I am opposed to nationalism and war" and "I exalt science" and leave it at that. Now that does not satisfy. How long shall I be free to maintain these excellent attitudes if I do not exert myself to defend them? The political end of one's philosophy now, has to be of a more practical quality. The question of "What are you going to do about it?" is more urgent. The sense of crisis accumulates. Every living philosophy is being brought harshly and swiftly to the test of immediate action.

In the face of the challenge of our time it no longer suffices merely to disapprove of war and of the freedom of egotistical recklessness in the private exploitation of natural resources. The call to immediate action requires a plan for immediate action. We need a working estimate of the disorders we have to face. Certain facts now stare us in the face. All war is not nationalist; abolish nationalist sovereignty and there would

still be a social war on hand. Moreover war changes its physical conditions and material effects monstrously, and so it follows that a philosophy which professes to be living must be prepared to state what it is that has so greatly exacerbated the war danger at the present time. I find the answer to that inquiry, in a great release of human energy and a rapid dissolution of social classes, through the ever-increasing efficiency of economic organization and the utilization of mechanical power. As machinery and the material organization of life has improved, social order has become deliquescent.

Let me put this idea as plainly as possible. Throughout the ages the processes of social life have been carried on by long-established and well-defined classes, professions and types of functionary, priest, soldier, lawyer, artisan, merchant, peasant. They had all, in effect, time-sanctioned codes of behaviour, codes that were almost universally understood and respected. A sort of rough social balance among these elements had stood the tests of several thousand years. There was balance during that period even in the structure and method of armies and the conduct of war, with cavalry, infantry, and an accessory artillery. Life adapted itself gradually to such gradual changes as were in progress. Gunpowder, for instance, was a small slow innovation compared with the aeroplane and the tank. Then suddenly came the onset of power machinery and a new scale of human operations. New wholesale mechanical methods, transport of commodities, gas, explosives and so forth, have not only made war an entirely different and more catastrophic thing but—what is not so universally recognized—they have twisted the old functional classifications of mankind in peace or war almost out of recognition. We did not realize what was happening until quite recently, and we are still trying to run a new and imperfectly

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understood machinery of living, with the traditions, feelings, sentiments, morality, culture, of the time-honoured old order.

These traditions, almost all of them over-implemented now and many of them now plainly mischievous or reduced to utter futility, tangle us into the most alarming and sanguinary strains and stresses. Old classes change or vanish; new ones appear. The old-fashioned farmer who satisfied most of his needs by his own products, has vanished over great parts of the world and we call the new crop-grower by his name and judge him by bucolic precedents. Really he has been as much industrialized as any factory hand. Formerly he grew food and material for clothing and little else. Now he grows also a vast variety of raw materials for chemical use in industry. Continually our productive efficiency increases and everywhere our new productions so outstrip our old traditions of financial control and marketing control that a new, hitherto unheard-of stratum of able-bodied, unemployed, untrained, and aimless young men appears. We get them in great multitudes, and our methods of distributing the products of industry, neither employ nor satisfy nor dispose of them. What are we to do with them?

All the civilized communities suffer from a sort of cancer of irrelevant, useless, energetic young people. Their lack of function is a purely disintegrating force. We seem to have no better employment for them than to turn them over to war-preparation, which must lead at last to their consumption in war. Human life has stalled; its organization has clogged with a growing surplus of human beings it can neither interest nor use. And this surplus energy produces violence and incoherent instinctive revolutionary movements of increasing gravity.

This condition of things was unanticipated. In three or four decades it has rushed upon us and become the major problem

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of the reclassification of society and the reorientation of humanity to a new, vaster, richer and more satisfying set of objectives, has to be tackled strenuously and immediately. It tolerates no philosophical aloofness. It towers over us all, a stupendous menace. Only an enormous intellectual effort throughout the whole world, can arrest this headlong delinquency of human society that is now in progress. So that for my own part I have become a shouting philosopher and I clamour, and I clamour with an increasing shrillness for a gigantic effort to pull together the mind of the race before it is altogether too late. "Adapt," I say, "let us adapt ourselves to these greater demands, or Man must perish and our faith is vain."

And it is because we do not know how to adapt, because of our lack of exactitude and coordination, that this necessity to inquire, to think hard, to accumulate the definite will for a new order, assumes an almost passionate predominance in my thoughts. Study, clarify, educate, without panic indeed but without a moment's delay, interchange and speak plainly, this must surely be the primary rule of life for every rational man and woman to-day. The hour is late, but still amidst the deepening shadows we may be in time. Build up an acceptable vision of a new world, make, not a flimsy gesture of good intentions, but work, work hard, to produce a reasoned and tried and tested common plan that will hold human minds together in a new order in the world. So I say and repeat, first in one form and then in another, that an educational revolution, a new encyclopaedism, a new mental synthesis, must be the basis of any better life, and that failing that, humanity must perish. At present all our efforts to produce a new human society are insufficiently implemented with knowledge. More science is needed, more interchange and

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more co-ordination. Act to that end. This is my philosophy of action; this is my philosophy of myself as a living part of Man, brought now by the danger of his ultimate failure, to a cutting edge.

Such in brief is my credo. I hope I have interested you and I hope I have not offended you. This is how I am living and how I hope to live to my end.

It has been good to be a part of life. Just as a sundial counts only the sunny hours, so does life know only that it is living. Many experiences there are in life, but one there is that we shall never have. We shall never know that we are dead. And I shall be fighting until I am dead. My creed, I can assure you, is not an unhappy creed. I have found it a good working creed, and at the most desperate an exciting one. Now that I have had an opportunity to revise it I find very little in it to alter except for this energizing note.



Rebecca West

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*Her major publications: "Henry James" (1916); "The Return of the Soldier" (1918); "The Judge" (1922); "The Strange Necessity" (1928); "Harriet Hume" (1929); "St. Augustine" (1933); "The Harsh Voice" (1935); "The Thinking Reed" (1936).*

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I HAVE NO FAITH in the sense of comforting beliefs which persuade me that all my troubles are blessings in disguise. I do not believe that any facts exist, or, rather, are accessible to me, which give any assurance that my life has served an eternal purpose. I do not find this distressing. That is not because my life has been so happy that its superficial import strikes me as satisfactory. My childhood and my girlhood were overshadowed by the tragedies of my elders, and my twenties were a nightmare of overwork and harassment. Not till my marriage—and I married in my late thirties—did I have one human being close to me who ever thought seriously of saving me fatigue or pain or responsibility. Now that I am at last able to take pleasure in both my family and my work, it happens that not only myself but all those whom I love may before long meet a violent death during the course of an idiot war or at the hands of idiot Fascists. There have been many worse fates than mine; but I cannot think it ideal.

Nevertheless, I feel no overwhelming anxiety to find some creed to assure me that all has been for the best, which will tell me that I have only to follow a particular path to be consoled by eternal happiness. It may be that I should feel such anxiety if I were stricken by a painful and incurable disease, but as yet I have not felt it. I do not even find in myself any great curiosity as to whether my soul is immortal or not. If I received definite and convincing information either way I should certainly be very interested, though not, I think, either

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extremely depressed or elated; but I do not feel the lack of such information as a hardship.

The real interest of the universe seems to me not to lie in these directions at all. The reason I feel no hunger for a creed that shall reveal to me the secret of the universe is that I do not see how the existence of such a creed is compatible with the condition of humanity. I cannot understand how our minds, which have been formed by response to the emergencies of a small corner of space and time, could possibly comprehend a revelation of the total universe even if it were granted to them. I can understand that we might be given a mystical intuition of the nature of the universe, and this would penetrate to the core of our being, which lies far beneath the level of our consciousness, and would determine our thoughts and actions—indeed, I believe that we must have received such an intuition, for otherwise we would not so often love life when by all logical criteria it is unlovable. But creeds claim to do much more than convey or support mystical intuitions. They pretend to explain the total universe in terms comprehensible to the human intellect, and that pretention seems to me bound to be invalid. I feel this as strongly about the non-Christian and anti-Christian creeds as about the Christian creeds, in so far as they make the statement, which seems to me the lie-of lies, that seeks to cut down the growing tree of life before it has borne fruit, "All is now known."

I have, as I have said, no faith, in the sense of a store of comforting beliefs. But I have faith in a process, in a particular process that is part of the general process of life, though it is sometimes annulled by it. I find an ultimate value in the efforts of human beings to do more than merely exist, to choose and analyse their experiences and by the findings of that analysis help themselves to further experiences which are

of a more pleasurable kind. I use the word pleasurable in its widest sense: to describe such experiences as come from good food and wine, exercise, the physical act of love-making, the practice of a beloved craft or art or science, a happy marriage, the care of children or the sick or the old by those who enjoy it, the service of valid ideas or the administration of worthy institutions or the pursuit of art or science. *Trahit sua quemque voluptas*. By indulgence in these experiences life is made more pleasant from day to day. That is in itself of the first importance. That end would be worthwhile pursuing if no other benefit were obtained. But it also serves the purpose of furnishing each human soul with access to the avenue along which it can advance farthest toward the comprehension and mastery of life. Pleasure is not arbitrary; it is the sign by which the human organization shows that it is performing a function which it finds appropriate to its means and ends. I take it as a prime cause of the present confusion of society that it is too sickly and too doubtful frankly to use pleasure as a test of value.

There is, of course, the objection that man's tastes are so inherently vicious that if pleasure is taken as a standard he would exhaust his vital powers in drunkenness and sexual licence. I do not believe this to be true of humanity as we know it in our civilization. It obviously is true in certain circumstances which prevent the development of alternative amusements. Convincing evidence of that is given in John Morris' anthropological study, *Living with Lepchas*, but the evidence speaks of a restriction of general appetite quite as remarkable as the indulgence of these particular appetites. I have observed human beings for a number of years in the United States and in all countries of Europe, except Russia, Poland, Rumania, and Turkey; and I do not find that dissi-

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pations of this sort are their special temptation. The mass of people who drink are found in the groups who, either by reason of extreme wealth or poverty, are cut off from the normal process of exploiting knowledge and capacities; and even of those groups they form an extremely small proportion. There is little evidence to show that sex is a greater danger than alcohol. It is doubtful whether Western men and women have any marked excess of sexual potency over and above what is required in a monogamous relationship. Certainly men and women require a certain amount of sexual intercourse, and in modern times they own to this need, and many insist on satisfying it in unsanctioned means if social and economic barriers stand between them and the sanctioned means; but there are few signs that either men or women want to indulge in sexual intercourse to an extent that is damaging either to themselves or society. Except where the peasantry are so poor that it has to count its daughters as livestock in order to survive, the number of women in any community who become prostitutes is small; and those that do rely for custom chiefly on travellers and men who are obliged to work far from home. There is about as much reason to suppose that mankind is likely to wreck itself by drunkenness and lechery as there is to suppose that it will extinguish itself by vegetarianism, teetotalism, and celibacy.

The fear that pleasure is an unreliable standard because the common man will identify pleasure with debauchery has two sources, neither of which is discreditable. First, there is the recollection of the difficulty found in more elementary stages of society to distract man from concentration on the simpler forms of animal gratification. This is strong in people who have been involved with a deprived proletariat, either as a despised member of that class or as one of the despising

*bourgeoisie*. Secondly, there is the exaggerated consciousness of a real twofold difficulty in education. It is certainly not easy to convince young people that the simple and direct pleasures of "having a good time" will pale before the more complicated pleasures of adult life, which may even involve having quite a bad time. There is no way of giving a pinafores child a certain proof that ultimately it will like many kinds of food and drink far better than an ice-cream soda, or assuring a boy of sixteen that some day he may find working in a tropical hospital just as enjoyable as speeding in an automobile, or a girl of sixteen that some day she may find just as great happiness in looking after several children on small means as she does in dancing. It is also difficult to persuade young people to undergo the preliminary training necessary for them to enjoy adult pleasures, since this is often temporarily painful. The elementary stages of musical education are usually intensely boring, even to those who are best able to profit from it later. On both these sources of fear candour can shine with a helpful light. We need not be afraid that the drunkenness and promiscuity of the slums reveal the common trend of human life if we admit to ourselves that the greater decorum of the *bourgeoisie* is the result not of renunciation, which is indeed not a process we can count upon, but of command over more refined and satisfying means of self-indulgence. The educational difficulty is much graver. It can never be easily solved; if adults admitted to children that they lived for pleasure, of the value of which every child has an intuitive knowledge, instead of for some undefined value which is served by renunciation, children would put much more trust in the good faith of adults and accept their advice about the most useful preparation for life.

It is of paramount importance that these difficulties should

be faced and that pleasure should be recognized as a reasonable standard, for certainly chaos establishes itself if we do not. The belief that all higher life is governed by the idea of renunciation poisons our moral life by engendering vanity and egotism. It is actually the case with most of us that we are creatures of limited potency, with hardly enough capacity to carry out the regular routine to fulfill the responsibilities to which we were born. Our problem is to increase our vigour and to respect and aid those among us who are in possession of exceptional vigour, but we are distracted from our attack on it by our pretence that we have already solved a problem of a much more spectacular kind. A man of mediocre gifts, whose task it is to keep stoked the furnace of a moderate-sized dwelling house, is not likely to do it better if he is under the delusion that he has just extinguished a colossal forest fire. It is also actually the case that if we take gratification as our ideal we thereby impose on ourselves a programme of self-restraint; for if we claim that we are under the necessity of learning all that we can about reality, and that we learn most through pleasure, we must also admit that we are under the necessity of hearing what our fellow creatures learn about it and of working out a system by which we all curb our pleasures so that they do not interfere with those of others. If, however, we claim that it is by renunciation that we achieve wisdom, we have no logical reason for feeling any disapproval of conditions that thrust pain and deprivation on others. It is easy thereafter to fall into the depths of humbugging greed and dishonesty, especially in regard to the maintenance of inequitable economic situations. The premises of this philosophy make it possible to gratify all the baser impulses under a cloak of propriety by saying: "I am a rich man, but I have this and that individual sorrow which keeps me a saved and spiritual



man. It is true that the source and extent of my wealth are such that others have to go poor in order that I should have it, but this is a good thing, as it provides them with the barrier between them and their desires which is necessary for salvation."

This attitude inevitably engenders hatred. Where the inequality of economic conditions is too marked, where a faulty system holds a number of workers on the subsistence line, it becomes necessary for the rich to pretend that the poor are a separate and wicked race, who would certainly be damned if they were not given this opportunity for purification through misery. This is a point of view which was openly expressed in all Western literature during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and though that class at which it is now fashionable to sneer, the intellectuals, have jeered at this hypocrisy till it rarely dares show its face in print, it is repeatedly expressed in the conversation and oratory of the possessing classes.

But indeed we need no further argument in favour of taking pleasure as a standard when we consider the only alternative that faces us. If we do not live for pleasure we will soon find ourselves living for pain. If we do not regard as sacred our own joys and the joys of others, we open the door and let into life the ugliest attribute of the human race, which is cruelty. I believe this vice to be as much of a shame and a doom to humanity as the original sin of the theologians; and I believe it to be the root of all other vices. I do not believe people are cruel because they are greedy; I am sure they invent greed as a pretext for cruelty. I am as sure that the sexual caprice which makes people desert still loving mates or thrust their attentions on those who are offended by them has not its origin in the pure sexual instinct, but is a use made of it by cruelty, seeking an instrument. I take it that cruelty is an early

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error of the mind, which becomes a confirmed habit before reason can disperse it. Hatred necessarily precedes love in human experience. After the tideless peace of pre-natal existence the child is born into a world of uncomfortable physical experiences and terrifying uncomprehended controls. It must feel that in order to preserve itself it must lay about it, it must beat with its hands, and plot evil against the aggressors. Thus a habit is initiated; thus a fantasy is engendered. It is imagined that it is right to inflict pain, which is given the most intricate and noxious ramifications by early experience. When one inflicts pain on the surrounding world one is punished, one is treated as guilty. This does not rob pain of its majesty; one suffers a greater pain than one inflicted, for punishment is pain, and punishment is acclaimed as good and holy. Is it not a way of salvation to be punished?

This last question the mind, being no fool, transforms quickly into another. If it did not do so, the human race would quickly become extinct, rushing forward to impale itself on expiatory tortures. Out of the instinct for self-preservation, and logically enough, it asks, "If it is a good and holy thing to be punished, must it not also be a good and holy thing to punish?" It answers that it is; and our earth becomes the hell it is. Thus we human beings plant in ourselves the perennial blossom of cruelty: the conviction that if we hurt other people we are doing good to ourselves and to life in general. It determines the course of all history, the forms of our institutions, the pattern of our lives; and the effect of it in all these spheres is death. It cannot have any other result, since pain is a warning that something is being done to the organism which is inimical to its well-being.

To destroy this cancer of our spirit is our real problem. Since its destruction means the correction of the whole struc-

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ture of life down to the foundations that were laid when it first became self-conscious, it is a problem which is almost certainly beyond our power ever to solve completely. When we put our hands to this problem we must abandon all hope of success, certainly in our time, possibly in eternity. This is, however, of no importance. Any success achieved against cruelty is in itself absolute. I mean by this that it gives us and those from whom the cruel act has been averted an intense pleasure which could not be increased by a quantitative increase of the success. To pretend that those of us who hate cruelty are martyrs pledged to fighting a hopeless battle is humbug. We are liable to feel great anger and distress and to be put in prison and physically injured by cruel people. But actually we have a great deal more pleasure in our lives than those who pretend that the only problem before us is to curb an imaginary tendency toward intemperance and excessive copulation. Perhaps because they are perpetually confronted with evidence disproving their case, since the mass of human beings are sober and continent and nevertheless life is horrible, they are haggard by irritability and intolerance.

I was made aware of the part cruelty plays in the world during my childhood, because I grew up in the shadow of the Dreyfus case. I am of pure Aryan descent. Though naturally I now feel a certain shame in confessing this, I must mention it here to make it quite clear that the Dreyfus case was discussed in my home circle with complete detachment. My father had been an army officer, and would have been a great criminal lawyer had he chosen another career, and he could judge both the military and legal aspects of the trial; and my mother was a woman of brilliant understanding and considerable experience of Continental life. They had talked over the case from the beginning, and later they had a special

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insight into it when the great journalist, G. W. Steevens, with whose family mine was very friendly, was sent to Rennes to report the trial. The earlier stages of the trial took place when I was too young to follow it; but I suppose I absorbed it through the pores, and I certainly remembered its later stages, culminating in the return from Rennes and the rehabilitation of Dreyfus. Therefore I learned early that a people, saddened by defeat and thirsting for a miraculous restorative draught, fancied that it could administer such to itself by the simple process of punishing a man for an offence of which they could not possibly believe him guilty: that is to say, the severest form of punishment conceivable, punishment on a pretext which the victim knows to be unjust.

I confirmed the existence of this human tendency in my youth when I examined certain laws laid down by society for the regulation of the position of the sexes. I realized that the subjection of women serves no purpose whatsoever except to gratify the desire for cruelty both in women and in men. This is obvious in connection with one common phenomenon springing from the sexual instinct. The story of Gretchen in Goethe's *Faust* is its classic example in literature. There are adventures which plainly punish themselves. A girl lives with a man outside marriage, and when she has a child he leaves her without the support of his affection or his money; a woman deserts her husband for a lover who tires of her and deserts her in turn. Such women are obviously far from fortunate. They cannot hope to have as easy or pleasant lives as ordinary women. But society, instead of letting them get on with their imperfect lives as they can, sets about visiting them with every petty annoyance that it can think of, as if they had found out some way of living that is enormously enjoyable and likely to be followed by all women if they are not

discouraged by the spectacle of persecution; the reason for this odd behaviour is plain when it is observed that an intoxication, a perversion of pleasure similar to that given by drugs or drink, fills and inflames all the people who take part in these attempts at annoyance. The majority has, in fact, found a minority which it is safe to hurt. Such women are bound to form only a small proportion of the population; the inducements to normal sexual behaviour, the secure possession of a husband and the first claim on his affections and economic resources, are likely to overcome all but the strongest compulsions. Therefore the majority of women who are not as these, and the entire male sex, have here a safe object for their aggressive instincts.

Much incidental suffering follows; but what is even more important is that the public mind has been sidetracked from working out a system of morality by which the genetic interests of the human races are subserved. If you say to a man and woman to-day, "You must exercise self-control for the sake of your children," they will instantly see a picture of themselves refraining from having sexual intercourse with some attractive members of the opposite sex, who would probably never look at them in any circumstances; and naturally you will find it hard to gain their sympathy or even their attention while you explain that what you mean is that the time has now come for adults to curb their appetites and make the provision of the goods necessary for the development of sound children a first charge on the economic resources of society, thus buying milk and peace before luxuries and adventure.

But it is important not to make the mistake of supposing that you can make people exchange a sexual morality that serves the interest of cruelty for one that serves the interest

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of love without imposing real and hideous suffering on them. I reiterate that cruelty is a part of our structure, that naturally we function by it. The proof lies in consideration of another aspect of the feminist movement. All over the world men put women to great inconvenience by pretending that women are as inferior to them in mind and character and social value as they are in muscular strength. I myself used to think this to be a caprice springing from vanity, which could be as easily corrected as a girl's belief that she is not only very beautiful but the most beautiful girl in the world, without any catastrophic results. I am now sure that I was quite wrong.

In the economic depression that befell Europe and America after 1929, many men fell into unemployment and were swept with their wives and families to the brink of starvation; but some men who lost their employment had wives who, by reason of some special talents or aptitude for industries unaffected by the depression, were able to earn wages and support themselves and their husband and children. In any sane world the men in the second group would have been happier than the men in the first. They would realize, sometimes very painfully, that society is wise in at least one of its conventions and that it saves a lot of trouble as a general rule if men go out to work and women stay at home; but they would be glad that a temporary suspension of the general rule had saved themselves and those whom they loved from hardship, and proud that their wives possessed the talent which made this possible. But in fact this was not so. The men of the first group, who had suffered and seen those whom they loved suffer, were damaged far less by their experiences than the men in the second. Many of them were spoiled by them, it would seem for ever. Some fell into infantilism and wanted to remain

in a permanent state of dependence; and others formed a deep feeling of resentment against their wives which was sometimes so intense that it led to divorce.

This seems to mean that a large number of men need to believe that the reason that wives do not go out to earn a living is that they cannot. Yet it cannot mean that. A man might sincerely believe that his wife or any woman cannot scale the heights of achievement which have been reached by man: he may doubt that a female Mozart or Shakespeare can exist. But he really cannot sincerely believe that women, who keep the race alive by their competent performance of the tricky jobs of tending babies and the sick, and who undertake a large part of its education, are incapable of reaching the comparatively low standard of capacity demanded by the capitalist system from the mass of its employees. What he needs is to pretend that they could not, and to pretend that even if there were certain women who could, the particular women in his family could not.

This allegation of inferiority, when it is unfounded, amounts to the same sort of cruelty as keeping an animal in a cage too small for it; and it is cruel in the same manner as anti-Semitism, since the victims know themselves undeserving of such pain. But, like anti-Semitism, it fortifies the soul of those who inflict it, so that a man who was deprived of this fortification just at the moment when the economic system had defeated him, really suffered a serious injury of the soul. The converse can be seen in a society where men have played as virile a part as anywhere in the world.

The Christian men in the East of Europe, who were conquered by the Turks and, largely by the connivance of the Western powers, left in their power for five hundred years, were during all that time starved and misgoverned and despised.

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They preserved their culture and their courage untainted so that they never let die the knowledge and the hope of freedom, and in the Balkan Wars took back their land and re-established their civilization as if there were no death, as if life was an indestructible condition which nothing could threaten. Living among them, one perceives they are sustained by a certain kind of primitive Christianity, by music, by the subjection of women. There is no reason why the Balkan man should be angry with the Balkan woman—there is no competition between the sexes; she is loving and thrifty, her embroideries put her among the world's great artists. Yet in theory she is regarded as if she were an idiot, unhelpful, a beast that has to be fought back lest it turn dangerous; and in practice she is often treated so. She suffers immensely, but it is plain the suffering has not been wasted. It is so much red blood in the veins of her menfolk.

It may be argued that if a need to inflict cruelty is so inherent in our nature, and its satisfaction such a stimulus to performance, there can be nothing more useless and dangerous than to interfere with it. That is exactly the issue, it seems to me, on which we have to part company with the obvious and convenient if we are to be morally respectable. It is not tolerable that humanity should continue to pay such a price for well-being. Nor is it a simple matter of continuance, for an appetite grows by what it feeds on, and there is no knowing to what hell our developed love of cruelty may lead us before the earth cools and we come to an end. It is not a question of submitting to the subjection of women, and taking that as so much coin to be painfully put down. It might perfectly well happen that some scientific discovery and some change in the environment might put women into a position of power over men, and that women might find it immensely stimulating to





*[Photo: Madame Yevonde]*

REBECCA WEST



REBECCA WEST

develop a theory, and enforce it in practice, that men were happiest if they ran about on all fours with their posteriors painted like mandrills and were never allowed to learn to read. There is no end to the cantrips we may indulge in if we do not eradicate this cruelty from our nature, or to the deterioration of our history that may result; for if cruelty is a stimulus to action, it also determines the quality of our actions.

There are certain general ideas which seem to me to be imposed on us by the recognition of this cruelty. One is the necessity for freedom of speech and the arts. We have to scrutinize all the advances of society to judge whether they are cruel or frustrate cruelty, and for that purpose we must hear the evidence of all persons affected by their operation and of all persons qualified by experience or learning or speculative gifts to form an interesting opinion on what those operations might be. It is therefore necessary that all classes of men should be given the fullest opportunity to express themselves without constraint, not out of admiration for an abstraction, but as a practical measure toward human survival. It is also necessary that the artist, of whatsoever kind, should be free to anatomize the spirit, so that we can comprehend the battlefield that is the life, and which are the troops of light and which of darkness, and what light may be, and what darkness. For the essence of our human plight is confusion. Those who love cruelty dress themselves up as its enemies, and those who hate it appear to be, and sometimes are, its servants.

This deception is crystallized in its most pictorial, in its most horribly important form, by the history of Christianity. The spectacle of the rise of Fascism, and some contact with the Eastern Church, which is many centuries nearer primitive Christianity than the Western Church, have made it clear to me that the life of Christ should have been an incomparable

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blessing to man and a revelation of the way he must follow if he is not to be a beast, and a failure at that. Christ was an incarnate denunciation of cruelty. He was sinless, he was full of love, he was ingenious in devising prescriptions of mercy; he was what the world needed, he could have taught us how to make life a perpetual pleasure. Society could find nothing better to do with him than kill him. Here was a man who could have saved his life if he had dissimulated his virtue. He unveiled it, knowing that he made himself a target for man's arrows. Just as a great artist finds the perfect myth to symbolize the truth he has discovered, that shall sum it up in a form that is acceptable by the human faculty of attention, so his crucifixion demonstrated exactly what the assault of cruelty on the innocent means; and the subsequent services devised by the early Church commemorated the beauty of the virtue that was slain and the beastliness shown by the slayer, and reiterated the warning that this was the kind of crime man was inherently likely to commit unless he watched himself. There could be no more proper medicine for the human disease.

But conventional piety pours as much of the draught as it can down the drain by its attempts to develop a doctrine to account for the crucifixion of Christ as an atonement for the sins of man instead of a demonstration of them. These attempts are founded on the primitive idea of the magical value of sacrifice for propitiating the powers that be, and they were initiated by St. Paul, out of the legalistic quality of his mind. They were carried further by the Fathers of the Church, and given lasting authority by St. Augustine, the first theologian to be dominated by St. Paul. He was one of the greatest of geniuses and a most lovable character, but he was also a violent man, in love with violence and unrepelled by cruelty. He

therefore found great pleasure in imagining a gross drama in which the devil held humanity in his power by reason of its sins and would have condemned it to death wholesale had he not killed Christ, after which he could not claim the blood of humanity since in the divine life of Christ he had been paid so much more than it owed him. Since God is omnipotent, He is of course responsible for this whole arrangement, and Augustine admits that He could have arranged for the redemption of man by other means, and that He chose this one only because it proved His love for humanity. In fact, a crime which should have shamed humanity into virtue is shown to be the contrivance of the highest good, and the criminals to have served the most mystical and exalted of ends. This doctrine involves so many absurdities that no church, neither Protestant nor Catholic, has ever formulated it precisely and adopted it. But vaguely as it is held, it nevertheless has poisoned the Western mind with the suggestion implied in the word atonement. Cruelty has made the forces of its chief enemy work in its service.

It is the intellect which performs this perversion, though we are most familiar with its effects in the emotional sphere, with the disagreeable substitution of exaltation for the shame and pity we should feel at the sufferings of Christ on the cross which is indulged in by all the Western churches. But we see it also directly inscribed on life by conduct, notably in connection with sex and politics. The desire of men and women to be cruel to the people who commit themselves to their mercies in a sexual relationship is gratified by the existence of at least as many men and women who find it possible and indeed preferable to love those who treat them ill; and these last are as much responsible for the evil situations in which they are involved as those who initiate them. They

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complain of cruelty, the whole of literature echoes with their sighs; but they present themselves in such numbers and so stoutly endure the unendurable that its balance of sexual life, save where it is generously subsidized by nonsexual elements, is on the side of suffering.

The history of people shows a not less discreditable balance sheet. Again and again civilization cancels its own advance; so that it is more often than not a half-forgotten idea instead of a developing theme. This is the consequence of a pervasive weakness in the liberal forces that oppose cruel races or systems of government. Their policy is unworthy of their intellectual level, they envelop themselves in organizations which lead to dissension and betrayal, and above all they do not use the full energy that must be at the disposal of such a quantity of persons of such quality. The curious failure of European liberals to stiffen their opposition to militarist tyranny after the Great War of 1914, though that very soon, certainly by 1925, showed itself to have been an indecisive campaign, is typical of a score of passages in the Christian era; such as the frivolity with which the Christian European powers refused to unite against the invading Turks when they came out of Asia.

In the sexual and political spheres alike these defeats are due to the refusal to recognize pleasure as the supreme value in human life. This refusal leaves man to indulge in some of his characteristically false logic. His mind, which is quite inadequate for the purpose of mastering his environment and therefore always oversimplifies, sees the universe in antitheses, in dichotomies. He says, foolishly enough, for one cannot cut into clean halves two substances that pass into each other by insensible gradation, that there is light and darkness, life and death, pleasure and pain. He feels a need to identify these antitheses one with another, and since he is not allowed to

make the obvious identification between pleasure and life and light, which would be rough indeed but sound enough save for the most crude and diseased character, he comes to the conclusion that the universe is a queerer place than he thought it, and he agrees with the cruel that life and light are pain. But there is that in all the more decent sorts of human beings which warns them that it is a filthy thing to inflict pain, and therefore all that are most likely to give themselves that warning and take it are likely to put themselves in the position of those on whom pain is inflicted; to be a beaten wife, a cheated husband, is better than being a bullying husband, an idle and spendthrift wife; to be put into a concentration camp is better than to put others into it. This must inevitably happen unless the emphasis is transferred to pleasure. Then only can a good man feel himself at ease in happiness with an unmalignant partner, and in victory over a bad man; then only will the human species have a chance to practise some other art than suicide, and creation oust nothingness.

To live by this philosophy is more difficult than following the old. Pain is always at hand in some form or other, but pleasure is harder to find; and these antitheses are protean and treacherous, always pretending to be one another. Birth control, for example, is a means of pleasure for women in certain circumstances: it enables them not to have more children than they can feed and clothe and adequately love. In other circumstances it can be the means of preventing them from knowing pleasure: it can enable a masculinist society to deny women the right to have any children at all, and keep them as starved and sterile producers and consumers of worthless goods in large towns, and in this second form it affects to make the same offer of freedom as the first, though in fact it enjoins slavery. But more dangerous than the protean

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nature of environment is the protean nature of our own souls, that constantly avails itself of these changes to pursue its own passion under cover.

It is because of the ineradicable persistence of cruelty in the human species, which may be incorrigible, that I should never be saddened to be warned of its passing. I can imagine no better news than to hear that there had emerged from the South American forest or the Australian desert specimens of a new species which would, by reason of some new organ or adaptation of an organ, be able to dominate man as man has dominated the other animals. They might, particularly if their reproductive systems were differently planned, be less morbid. Our lives would seem more tolerable and more honourable if we could know ourselves a transitional form, superseding what was worse and being superseded by what was better. Not that I feel our lives to be entirely intolerable and dishonourable. The living philosophy which really sustains us, which is our basic nourishment, more than any finding of the mind, is simply the sensation of life, exquisite when it is not painful.



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